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UNDER THE SURFACE.

BY

EMMA M. CONNELLY.

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TO THE POET,

HENRY T. STANTON,

(OF FRANKFORT, KENTUCKY,)

THIS BOOK

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.

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UNDER THE SURFACE.

PROLOGUE.

I AM socially inclined, good Public, and want the idea of companionship in the tedious work of composing a book; not a crowd—I cannot talk to a crowd: so you will excuse me if I select *one*, just one—that I may feel a strongly exciting individual presence appealing directly to my mind; and also if I reject the common "reader" of all other authors. The term is too generalizing, too indistinct and vague. It presents to my mind no *real*, living, breathing presence, but a vast and conglomerate sea of physiognomies, from which I can extract only a confused and mingled sense of sympathy and disapproval, good-will and antagonism.

I feel very kindly disposed toward my audience, and wish to establish the closest intimacy of thought, that I may speak freely and without hesitation or reserve whatever may come into my mind. I will call him "John," because I like the good, old-fashioned name, and because of beautiful childhood associations connected with it, which make it a pleasure for me to speak it in familiar and friendly tones.

He may be old or young, I do not care; I love the frank, open countenance of youth, the silvery hair of age, and all the gradations between. Some writer says that an author is always like a lover; and so "John" must be patient and amiable, and let me abuse him a

little and bore him a great deal, and then I will exert myself to the extreme limit of my capabilities, to be as little of a nuisance and a grievance in that line as possible.

What I require of you, sir, is to listen attentively, and comment freely; but *don't* be interrupting me, *if you please*, to say that some adjective is inappropriate, or to correct my grammar or rhetoric. When I grow sublime, John, I soar above these trivialities. Besides, I like a good, honest mistake occasionally. They show a person to be somewhat above abstract rule.

If I advance some old, old facts with the air of having made a new discovery, remember that I have not lived in a library, and do not know *all* the things that have been written since the flood. The ground I have to work upon is an ancient track, and has been worked over and over, until it is very barren in some spots, and cluttered over in others with the remains of other harvesters' crops. No doubt I have elaborated an amount of moralizing for you to skip, and it is just possible that there may be a lot of cant and "twaddle" in my book, for one cannot judge fairly of one's own performances.

I want to get as close to your thoughts as possible, and you must be sympathetic, John, and help me to conquer that dreadful shyness and reserve which isolates and shuts off our minds one from another. You will speak honestly and freely your disapproval; but never look distant, and coldly critical, for that chills and frightens away all confidence and sympathy. And though you enter my study with a careless smile of anticipated amusement, I think perhaps you will leave it with a more earnest, though I hope no less cheerful one.

The world owes more than it is willing to confess to poesy and romance. But for these delineations of inner life, what would become of our ideals of truth, justice, mercy, and charity in the dusty march of this prosaic, plodding life? Mere material lore,

such as treats of the internal workmanship of the world, makes us learned but not wise: whereas impassioned works—such as act upon the mind through spiritual influences—quicken the affections, strengthen the impressions of right and wrong, and elevate one into a higher atmosphere than that of this world.

"Men have reflected so little, upon the higher functions of literature," says an accomplished writer, "as to find it a paradox if one should describe it a mean or subordinate purpose of books to give information." Furthermore discourseth this acute philosopher and metaphysician: "all steps of *knowledge* carry one on in the same plane, but could never raise you one foot *higher*, whereas the very first step in power is a flight,—an ascending into another element where earth is forgotten." To this "literature of power" he ascribes tragedy, poesy, romance etc.

You wish a glimpse of our surroundings as I relate you the story? Nay, nay, John: what matters it whether our study be a stately apartment richly upholstered in rosewood, marble and velvet, and lined with books and pictures, or a meagre nook, as bare of furniture as a convent cell? Whether wealth or poverty preside, it is classic ground. A twilight obscurity, such as has enveloped the genius of the pen from time immemorial, pervades the sacred precincts; and a faint odor of that Levantine flower eruditely styled the *papaver somniferum* impregnates the air.

You are somewhat curious, too, in regard to the personal appearance of this companion of your evening hours? Since you are to be plagued with my society for a considerable length of time, it would but be justice in me to allow myself to be made as acceptable to your tastes as possible. So I hereby present you a *carte blanche* on the human physiognomy, and hope you will be enabled to make something agreeable out of it. Paint my portrait according to your fancy, John. Make me stately and imperious as the haughty Queen Bess; "faultily

faultless, splendidly null," as Tennyson's Maude; or "timid and fearsome" as Faust's Margaret, just as you like. Array me in elegant Parisian toilet, with diamond-dusted hair; or in the simplest and plainest attire your fancy can devise.

But whatever you make of me, John, I beseech of you, do not make me *ugly*. If your tastes incline that way, I shall have to revolt, and decline the proffered sitting.

"Speak, that I may see thee," was the requisition of a certain philosopher, before he consented to pronounce judgment upon the beauty of a human being; and perhaps you had better wait until you have heard all I have to say before you fix your estimate of my personal appearance; and then I fear, oh! I fear, my portrait, "in your mind's eye," John, *will* be ugly.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD PRISON.

It is chilly weather, John. There is a stiff wind blowing from the north, and the gloomy sky overcasts a landscape about as dull and commonplace as the human fancy could devise, or ragged fences, rifled corn-fields and mud achieve. Not a bird, or other living thing, in sight. Could there be anything less inviting?

But hold: do not *yet* complain that I have brought you to a spot wholly devoid of interest.

Do you see that great old weather-stained house which looms, from the pinnacle of a jagged hill, against the dull gray sky? A rambling old country house,—large enough, heaven knows!—and very irregular and quaint; with unexpected angles jutting forth upon all sides, and a clumsy porch in front, about which is draped a tangled net-work of rude vines. It is a wooden building, somewhat gothic in appearance, with its long low roof, from which project high-pointed dormer-windows; and I scarcely think they had been painted for a whole generation. The windows below are high up toward the roof, unshuttered and small, and, from a distance, look like eyes, and seem to squint, as if they had grown near-sighted with watching the highway for travelers who never came.

Upon one hand is spread out a little town of out-buildings, which stand or rather squat, disconsolately about, as if they contemplated the discretion of tumbling down; upon the other an orchard of gnarled trees, hoary and straggling with age and neglect. A rickety stile, which defies any sane person to mount

it, and a rusty pump of ponderous proportions, are the sole ornaments of the front yard, unless a low-spirited debilitated locust-tree could be called an ornament.

The scenery within is as venerable and hypochondriac as that without. Of the furniture no two pieces match, and the few aged prints of saints and madonnas which adorn the walls have grown to look feeble and dejected. The rusty door-hinges creak with age, and the loose windows rattle with every breeze. Against the wall of the "best room" stands an obsolete cabinet,—I call it obsolete because I scarcely think another such phenomenon in the way of upholstery survives the flood,—which maliciously keeps up the threatening attitude of being just ready to topple over and precipitate its load of dingy documents, which comprise the family library, upon the floor. Above the mantel of this respected room hangs a picture worthy of note, containing the pleasing device of Ananias and Sapphira in the act of falling dead from having told a lie.

The house is deserted at present—save by two; the numerous remainder being scattered abroad upon the farm, or in the barn or kitchen, variously employed. The kitchen, you must know, is detached from the house, according to ancestral ideas of domestic economy, so that the temperature of the viands is gauged in accordance with the state of the weather during their transit to the dining-room.

The dining-room of this antiquated homestead serves also as a sitting-room, and is so spacious an apartment that even the log-heap, which blazes and crackles in the huge fire-place, is insufficient to dispel the chilliness which pervades the remote corners.

Upon the broad rock hearth—the sort of hearth around which crickets sing—in the full blaze and shine of the crackling fire, sits a young woman—no, a girl, for she is twenty-two, at least—idly scrawling her name in the ashes. And yet in her physiognomy indolence has no place. There is a frown upon her brow—not a

frown of ill-temper, but rather of endurance—and a sort of suppressed energy in her attitude and motions. She has a look of willfulness and of great intellectual strength.

The head is larger than the generality of feminine heads, and covered with a luxuriant growth of short brown curls. These are not fancifully arranged, but swept back from the expansive brow in as unpretending a fashion as they could be persuaded to assume. The eyebrows, long and distinctly marked, have a peculiar curve—like Charlotte Cushman's, if you know how that is—and overarch a pair of remarkable-looking, dark hazel eyes. A creamy complexion, deeply tinted upon the cheek, a slender, ironical nose, a small mouth, with a short, curved upper lip and full under, and a chin strongly cut and rounded—and that was like the celebrated actress too. A countenance that would be beautiful and striking under any circumstances.

Her figure is superb. There is a fullness and plenitude about it suggestive of future stoutness, though at present the contour is perfect; added to all these physical advantages, she has a proud carriage of the head, an earnest manner, and emphatic tone of voice which could not fail to impress.

The other occupant of the room is an elderly lady, of feeble nervous organization; tall and lank of figure, with wide blue eyes full of wonder, and a countenance which, however devoid of mental strength or culture, bears unmistakable traces of good descent. Though neither very ready of wit nor precise of judgment, this woman could never be induced to commit a real mean or dishonorable act. She is a peculiar woman, and one of her peculiarities is a chronic predisposition to surprises. She must have been created for some other world, and had somehow got astray, for it seemed as if she could never get used to this one, and lived in a constant state of surprise at it.

"But, ma," the daughter is saying (for they are

mother and daughter, though there is nothing in their appearance to indicate so near a relation), "there is no use in me going into the kitchen now. Fan is nearly through ironing by this time; and besides, there's Sal,—I don't see why Sal can't do more, anyway."

And the determined tone in which she speaks convinces you that she *is not* going into the kitchen, no matter what transpires to urge it.

"You know Sallie has so many children to look after," returned the mother, "that she has very little time left for other things."

"Well, I can't, for the life of me, see the use in keeping servants if they are to spend the whole of their time in looking after their children."

"You know, Adele, that you would hate as badly as any of us to see Sallie and her children turned adrift in the world, especially when her good old mother had served us faithfully so long."

"I don't know anything about Sal's mother," returned Adele; "I have a dim remembrance of a big funeral, and high old carryings on. *I* hid up in the garret, I recollect, and remained there until they had all cleared out with their inhuman howling."

"Well, then," said her mother, "go and get your blue dress and mend it. You haven't done one earthly thing to-day."

"Ma, I don't want to wear that old blue dress any more. Fan can have it, or Sal."

"Oh, Adele, I wish you were ugly like your sisters. Then perhaps you would be of some account."

This remark elicited no reply, and in the few moments of silence which ensued she relinquished her scribbling in the ashes to contemplate her surroundings, with a strong expression of disapproval.

"I wonder this old house don't tumble down some of these windy nights," she said. "I wish it would!"

The few ancient pieces of furniture scattered along the wall, and the wide expanse of floor which spread

abroad, like a bare plain, with little roads of dull carpeting straggling across it, made up a picture that was dreary indeed to contemplate.

"Adele, you ought to be thankful that you have a shelter to cover your head," said her mother, reprovingly, "which is more than many have who are better than you."

"Heavens! how I hate to be poor!" continued Adele, banging the hearth with her poker by way of emphasis. "Where's the use for me to work? I might drudge my whole life away, and the miserable scratch I could accomplish could scarce be detected with a microscope. There are only two ways by which I could earn my bread,—teaching and sewing; I hate both, and would sooner starve and be done with it, than drivel my life off in such pitiful ways. Ma, why did you have such a swarm of children? Now, if there had been only Tom and me! and you know we are the only ones who are likely to be of any credit to you: unless it is Herve, who will make just such an old fogy farmer as pa."

"I hope he will, indeed!" exclaimed the mother fervently.

"But, as it is," resumed Adele, "Tom had to lie to his stylish chums at college, about the 'miserly old governor,' who was so excessively '*economical*,' that the poor fellow never had a spare dime to throw in on a treat."

"Holy mother!" exclaimed the invalid, in a shrill tone. "You don't mean to say that Tom's as bad as that! My honest Tom, who wouldn't tell his mother a lie for anything."

"Oh, there was never any need of Tom's telling his *mother* a lie,—because his mother was ready to believe him under any circumstances. But at school it was somewhat different. Tom *had* to lie to keep up his position. Why, if the students had got any idea of the state of pa's finances, all the first class fellows would

have dropped him, and Tom you know couldn't have stood that; he loves company too well, and he's too high-strung to take second-rate."

"Poor fellow!" ejaculated the mother feebly, "I wish we *were* rich, that he might not be so tempted."

"Well, ma, it was just as bad for me. I had always such a long string of lies to confess that Father Heenan was forever setting me Hail Marys,—but I never said 'em."

"Holy Mary! You wicked girl! That comes of your not saying your beads regularly. I knew, when you threw that scapula in the fire, which the holy Father McGregor had blessed, that no good would come of it. And, Adele, you knew it contained a piece of the sacred cross."

"Sacred nothing! that was no more a piece of the cross than that chip there. Besides, if it had been a piece of Christ himself I couldn't have worn it, after that devilish old hypocrite had touched it. I should have thought of him and how I hated him every time I saw it."

"Holy mother! forgive the child. I don't know what is to become of her. I don't indeed!"

The mother dropped feebly back upon her couch; the daughter poked the fire nonchalantly, and a high, gaunt clock in a distant corner of the room—a league off, it seemed—briskly clanged the hour of four. Simultaneously there was a smart rapping at the door. Adele sprang to her feet. "Sal! Sal!" she called, tapping upon the window nearest the kitchen. "Come here and go to the door! I guess you can leave your precious offspring long enough for that. Oh, heavens! these shoes!"

She shuffled off the shabby slippers she wore, and hastily drew on a pair of gaiters. A few strokes of the luxuriant brown hair, and she was ready for any emergency.

A few moments more, and the colored handmaiden

ushered in a young lady luxuriously hooded and cloaked in velvet and astrachan, and benignly beaming in serene, complacent smiles. She was tall, fair, of gentle feminine countenance, and wore a certain air of distinction difficult to describe.

"Good heavens! Ophelia Berges! What brought you here?" exclaimed Adele, looking as if she scarcely credited her senses.

"What brought me here?" returned the young lady, with a sort of quiet rapture in face and tone. "That same dilapidated hack—the only one the thriving village of Jonestown could afford—which you see toiling up your acclivity out there," pointing through the uncurtained window, "which is called a *hill* in these parts, I suppose. Come, Adele; get a little of the surprise out of your face; I want to see how you look."

There was a singular look upon Adele's countenance, —such as the delinquent prodigal son might have worn upon first beholding his injured father's face, made up of delight and fear, sickening fear. But it was gone in an instant, the mazed expression passed off from her countenance, and snatching her friend to her breast, she kissed her vehemently. The young stranger was then presented to "Mrs. Hughes," whose constitutional amazement seemed augmented to an unusual degree.

"Well now, I do declare!" she exclaimed, wonderingly. "Who would have dreamed of such a thing? Adele never expected to see you again. Never on earth! and sometimes she would cry over your letters, she would indeed (it was the only thing that *could* make Adele cry), because she could never dress well enough to visit you in the city, and she thought it would never do to ask you to come away out here among the hills, to this old place which she and Tom are so ashamed of."

"Never mind about that now, ma," said Adele. sharply. "Now that she is here, I am too glad to care whether she will like the old house or not."

"Adele never told me what a singular romantic old

home she had," said Miss Berges, stretching her feet toward the fire, and looking about the room with an air of quiet enjoyment.

"No," returned Adele, keenly regarding her friend, "I gave you to understand that it was quite different. I was just at this moment confessing to ma the lies I considered it necessary to tell at school to keep up my position."

"I was agreeably surprised, I assure you," returned Miss Berges. "I had pictured a great, new, square, factory-looking building, without porch or veranda, and totally bare of ornament, such as we usually see stationed along railroads. But this,—ages of poesy and romance seem to have breathed upon it!"

"You like it?" exclaimed Adele, with a breath of relief. "Well, then, I don't care how hideous it is. That is why I hated it and wanted a finer one, that you might visit me with some prospect of enjoying yourself."

"I never saw anything like it!" Her soft, bright eye rested with peculiar interest upon a flight of steps which extended some distance into the room, as if they had got a start from the top, and had not been able to stop sooner; an eye-sore to Tom and Adele, who, when they had nothing else to abuse, fell upon it.

"Tell me, Ophelia," said Adele, "how you happened to come. I should as soon have expected a three-tailed pacha or a long-eyed bey of the Ottomans."

"I had thought of it for some time," returned Ophelia, "though I said nothing to you, nor to any one, until this morning. I love to walk in on people and find them in their natural every-day looks. Nothing appears to advantage in company harness. Papa and mamma were going to Uncle Woolford's, and I begged off at Jonestown. I knew if I gave them time to consider they would object to my coming in that old hack alone. And so, here I am for a whole week! I had an idea that you would be glad to see me, though you had never invited me to come."

"Glad?" exclaimed Adele, and then desisted, in utter contempt of words. Then she bethought her to go and order a fire to be built in the "best room," and extra preparations projected for supper.

Ophelia Berges was very unlike her friend. She was as tall, but not so robust and blooming. Her face was of a pure oval, and delicately, yet decisively, featured. A profusion of fair Saxon hair was twisted about the crown of her head, according to the prevailing mode; the large, blue-gray eyes, somewhat dreamy and languid, were spanned by long, slender brows, which, singularly enough, were *black:* this being the only peculiarity of the grave, retentive face; not beautiful,—once for all, let me assure you, this young lady, so far as physique is concerned, is *not* beautiful; though, I own, there might be a few persons to whom she would appear lovely and fascinating beyond the most resplendent of her sex. Yet her manner had somewhat to do with that: a modest, unassertive manner that made no claims,—accepting admiration without elation, and indifference without discontent.

When Mrs. Hughes had wondered to her own satisfaction over the fashionable attire of the stranger, and extracted whatever other pabulum for amazement she could, Adele convoyed her into the "front room."

Why is it that the parlors of these far-away country houses have the inhospitable look and chill atmosphere of a tomb? As Ophelia Berges, the gregarious city girl, entered this prim company room, she felt a chill creep through her veins.

"Do scatter the chairs, Adele, and rumple that stiff curtain!" she exclaimed, shrugging her shoulders, and shivering slightly. "Tumble something about. Things look like they were arranged for a funeral."

When Ophelia walked out to supper, about an hour after, she was astonished at the army surrounding the table. You shall be spared the individual portraiture of this multitudinous domestic assemblage, John. There

are two, however, whom it is necessary you should know. Tom, the eldest,—the dandy and "lion" of the family,—is a showy young gentleman, whose small stock of talents is so furbished up and skillfully displayed as to have the appearance of many, and whose assurance stands him in stead of more substantial qualities. He is ruddy complexioned, has a quick, keen eye, a ready smile, and a tongue as glib as freshly-oiled machinery; a fair specimen of the "young man of the period." Herve is two years younger than his brother; a broad-shouldered, sturdy young Hercules, with a quiet gray eye, a cheerful countenance, and a frank, unassuming manner.

"Well," said the head of the house (of whom Herve was a pretty correct copy), when the first restraint had worn off, "what do you think of our life among the hills?"

"I can scarcely tell just yet," said the visitor, running a deliberate glance over the group surrounding the table; "the difference is not so great as I had expected, so far from the city."

"Not quite so benighted as you had thought?" inquired Tom, with a laugh.

"I had expected to find you at least a *little* in the rear of city people in refinement and culture," she returned.

"How do you know that we are not?" inquired Herve, blankly.

"Oh, that is plain enough," said the young lady, smiling upon the ingenuous, open countenance across the table. "Your faces, manner, and voices tell me that, although you may not have been much abroad in the world, you are accustomed to good society. I would know you for educated people under any circumstances."

This was spoken so seriously and unaffectedly that the head of the household smiled complacently upon his flock as he replied: "You city people take the palm in reading countenances,—you have good opportunities

for studying them; but you are not generally deep thinkers. The variety of city life tends to scatter and dissipate thought. Now that you have discovered culture in a place you had supposed inaccessible to it, let us see if you can trace it to its source."

"There was culture to begin with," ventured Ophelia, after a moment's thought. "You and your wife were educated people."

"I thought you would miss it," he returned, looking gratified. "Don't you know that young folks are influenced more by their associates than by their parents? It is almost always the case, and but for some very powerful auxiliaries we could not have kept our children far above their rude companions."

"Teachers?" suggested Ophelia.

"Yes, teachers," he replied, "and very effective ones,—that is, the best *periodicals* the country affords. You will find my children all pretty well up with the times."

"Good periodicals not only keep us up with the times," said Herve; "that would be a rather evanescent sort of acquirement, but they point us to more substantial sources for obtaining knowledge. Though we have but few books, you will find them well selected, good, and instructive."

"It is true, Adele and Tom have had the additional advantage of browsing a year or two in colleges," continued the confidential *paterfamilias;* "Herve chose a medical course instead,—and came back crammed with a lot of rubbish, like stuffed birds."

"Useless, so long as we are imprisoned in this wilderness," said Tom; which served as a text for a short and pointed discourse from Adele, to the effect that life, within "that old shell," was not worth considering. The subject went the rounds; "we might as well be in prison; we have no congenial associates, no congenial pursuits."

The two homely elder sisters alone defended their

rugged home; perhaps from a spirit of antagonism, perhaps because they were too proud to appear ashamed of their surroundings, or more likely could look for nothing better beyond. Herve said nothing.

The young stranger seemed to be a close observer, though of a quiet, reflective turn, and not much gifted in small talk. It might have been that she was thinking, just then, of how ungrateful and unappreciative children are generally for all the favors lavished upon them by their parents; typical of the ingratitude of man for the continued goodness of the eternal Father.

How many times, John, have you exclaimed, "Oh, if I only lived in the peaceful seclusion of country life, under my own vine and fig-tree, how much *better* I could be"?

But, John, it is a melancholy fact, that human nature, however favorable the circumstances may be, invariably fails to reach even the boundaries of perfection; and that there is no place too remote for the seeds of discontent to find their way, or too sterile for the noxious plant to flourish luxuriantly.

CHAPTER II.

THE ROOT OF THE UPAS-TREE.

Now, John, if I were talking to the public at large instead of you,—just you,—I would entirely omit this chapter; for the "public at large," I know, will consider it an exceedingly dry and uninteresting one. But, John, these thoughts have a strong hold upon my mind and must be expressed, even at the risk of incurring your displeasure at the very outset of our acquaintance. Therefore, I will only hope that your generous

heart, which, I am sure, feels more concern for the good of human-kind than for your own individual entertainment, will approve of my efforts toward the demolishing of an evil, which, like the ill-favored kine of Pharaoh's vision, devours the fat of the land.

The Hughes family were not endowed with a variety of financial resources. Hogs and brandy were the staple of their income. The hogs, as an important feature of farm-life, must be exhibited to the visitor; so the young ladies were escorted to the "corn-pen" one evening, to see them fed. There was a host of them, to be sure, and it was curious to witness the wonderful energy and cheerfulness these slothful creatures exhibited—like some worthy people I have seen—over their meals. The hogs are utilized at last; I wonder if the people are!

The hogs, not representing any important purpose to the visitor, soon lost the power to charm, and Ophelia's wandering eye, in quest of something more interesting, lit upon an unaccountable building in the distance.

"What is that?" she inquired.

"*That*," returned the old gentleman, curtly, "is a distillery."

Ophelia looked shocked. She had seen so much of drunkenness in the city, that, with her inquiring mind, it was not possible she should not have traced this giant evil to its source.

"Sometimes I almost determine to tear it down," said Mr. Hughes, observing the change in her countenance. "But my income makes such narrow escapes each year of falling short of our necessities, that I am withheld, from the fear of coming to want. And then I hate to see the fruit going to waste."

"If you only had a railroad," returned Ophelia, "you might ship your fruit and grain to the city, and thereby contribute a part toward the comfort and support of the country."

"Yes, it would be better, perhaps; but who is going

to cut one through these cliffs?" he returned. "I know a distillery is not a blessing to a community, but you see *necessity* drives me into it."

"Perhaps you might be enabled to diminish your necessities if your income was made less," suggested Ophelia.

"Oh, that seems quite practicable to people who have never been deprived of the comforts of life," said Mr. Hughes, a little sternly. "*Theory* and *practice*, you must know, present widely different views. One is looking upon life from a parlor window, the other from a tread-mill. This lofty moralizing of you parlor people seldom produces any result. The *real* reformation of the world lies in mechanics, which will widen and multiply opportunities for earning our bread, so that we may not be driven into crooked by-ways, and lighten our labor, that we may have more leisure for enlightening our minds."

"But first you must get your public into a state of *willingness* to be enlightened," she returned archly; "and I should like to hear how you would propose to accomplish that."

"Oh, I suppose your theorizing and your moralizing from parlor windows would come in play there," he replied, with a smile; "but it takes an immense amount of it to produce any practical result."

"Yes, and it takes an immense amount of your working in the 'tread-mill' to complete a successful work," she rejoined.

"There is no use in trying to dispense with either," said Herve, who had been listening attentively for some time; "because both are equally necessary and essential powers. For instance, intemperance will never be expelled from a land until the people are brought to reflect *seriously* on what a formidable and potent power of evil it is, and to act upon the thought in clearing the country of every institution which contributes to its support."

"It is not *my* fault," said Mr. Hughes, looking slightly offended, "nor the fault of any other distiller, that men will be such fools as to get drunk. We are bound to have whisky for medicinal purposes, and some one must make it. If I don't, some one else will."

"And yet," said Herve sternly, waving his hand toward the distillery, "this is the root of the upas-tree, which spreads its blighting influences throughout the land. And *so flimsy* is the foundation of human justice, that the well-to-do distiller, holding himself aloof from the misery he causes, is considered a respectable and virtuous person, while the saloon-keeper is scoffed at and spit upon by all upright citizens as the obnoxious cause of all the misery of drunkenness; perhaps upon the principle of Cicero, who considered *trade* irredeemably base if upon a *small* scale, but not so utterly despicable if *wholesale*."

Mr. Hughes made no reply, but turned and went toward the house, perhaps not caring to engage before auditors in a discussion which must ultimately result in his own confusion.

"You are right!" exclaimed Ophelia, nodding approvingly toward Herve.

"I wish I could make my father think so," said Herve, with a sigh. "There is more money in the whisky trade than in any other, so he shuts his eyes to the evil it causes, builds all sorts of flimsy arguments about his conscience, and will not see what a blotch his distillery is upon the face of the country. If the sensible distiller could only be induced to rise for a moment above the little concern of his own fortune and take a fair look at his distillery, and reflect how it absorbs the nourishing fruits of the land, giving in return *poison* with which to obliterate the nobler instincts of his race, and render thousands of homes more wretched than his watch-dog's kennel, saloons, distilleries, and drunken revels would melt away and

disappear from the face of the earth. But he will not trust himself to reflect upon the subject, for fear he will be induced to relinquish a lucrative business."

"I think you had better stop there, Herve," interrupted Adele. "You have said about enough against your father."

"Pa only distills for medicinal purposes," said Tom; but the hue of Tom's eye testified to the fact that *other purposes* were included.

The fact is, no one ever heard of a distiller who *did not* distill merely for medicinal purposes; but somehow the bulk of the distillations goes to make brutes of their fellow-men.

Once for all, why does not the government take the distillery business out of the hands of individual speculators, and manufacture simply the amount required for medicinal purposes?

Suppose, John, that you were organizing in some beautiful and fertile country a colony which you desired to make a perfect Arcadia of peace and plenty, would you say to the distiller and his indispensable aid, the bar-keeper, "Sirs, our peace and prosperity are incomplete without you. Come and do *your* part toward creating upon this earth a new paradise"?

Ah, no, my good, sensible John. You shake your head. "I should not want *them* in my Arcadian village," is your verdict.

Ah, John, it sickens me to look into men's souls and see upon what worthless, unsound principles and purposes the most of them hinge their lives. How they will smother down generous impulses, stifle their consciences, lie, cheat, and steal for gain!

It is a good thing—a thing everlastingly to be grateful for—that there is no practicable method for limiting the air we breathe, or we would have the sky above us divided into compartments by the enterprising inhabitants of this world, and sold to the highest bidder.

What is wealth, at last, when cast in the balance with other human achievements? wealth, which in our democratic country seldom lasts through two generations, being accumulated by the father and squandered by the son.

The man who amasses a fortune seldom makes use of it. The notoriety it creates, the precedence it gives, suffices for him. Descending to the bottom of all human structures, do we not find the greater portion of them resting upon just such a foundation?

A few—the nobility of this earth—work for the good of the race; but the greater portion build a temple unto themselves for the perpetuation and aggrandizement of their own name. Beyond the short sojourn of this life, in the searching light of eternity, the work of their life will appear a bauble for which they have bartered their souls.

You remember, John, that glittering but insubstantial ice-palace erected by the Russian empress Elizabeth, with which to spread abroad the glory of her name? Listen, my friend, and take heed how the structure of your own life compares with the poet's picture of the czarina's "Folly":

"Lamps gracefully disposed and of all hues
Illumined every side; a watery light
Gleamed through the clear transparency, that seemed
Another moon new risen;—
Long wavy wreaths
Of flowers that feared no enemy but warmth
Blushed on the panels. Mirror needed none
Where all was vitreous; but in order due
Convivial table and commodious seat
(What seemed, at least, commodious seat) were there!
Sofa and couch, and high-built throne august.
The same lubricity was found in all,
And all was moist to the warm touch; a scene
Of evanescent glory, once a stream,
And soon to slide into a stream again.
'Twas transient in its nature as in show
'Twas durable; as worthless as it seemed
Intrinsically precious; to the foot
Treacherous and false—it smiled, and it was cold."

CHAPTER III.

SURFACE IMPRESSIONS.

WITHOUT, a cold, dark, ugly night; a night that moans and tosses fitfully, as a sleeper struggling with troubled dreams. Within, flaring lamps, flowing curtains, and ample fires.

The two friends are seated upon either side of a small table, which is piled with books and papers, old, old periodicals, in which might be found the early efforts of authors who now perch upon the topmost pinnacle of fame; and of others equally promising, who have descended into obscurity. Upon the successes and failures of these the two youthful philosophers speculated with great earnestness.

Ophelia's mind was somewhat plodding, and worked by easy and comfortable stages toward conclusions. Adele's fancy, on the contrary, had run wild in the brooding solitude of her lovely country home, and was not to be restrained by the respectable harness of fact, but plunged tumultuously into wild and dangerous paths, dallying over unfathomable abysses of thought, or soaring into awesome heights of speculation, and ever with a tendency to mirthfulness, even in the sublimest precincts of thought.

Observe them well; mark the striking differences in them. The blonde with her black brows and sunny hair, her tranquil, questioning gray eyes, and arched, flame-colored mouth, about which there always lurks a quiet smile. "A face which expresses nothing but amiability and sweetness," you say.

Ay! and you might watch it unremittingly for years, and still it is likely your verdict would remain the same.

"Otherwise it has nothing in it," and you turn away a little vexedly; but your glance returns again and again, each time with increasing interest. You are a shrewd observer and are not to be misled. "It has *much* in it," is your final conclusion, "hidden, hidden so far beneath the smooth surface that she herself has no knowledge of it. She judges herself according to the voice of her associates,—that she is an angel of goodness, an example for the world, and that she could never, never be tempted into evil. But there is *other* beneath.

How much in contrast to the quiet, effortless movements and liquid tones of the one are the swift, electric motions and clear, ringing voice of the other! Observe that keen, dark eye, that mobile mouth. "There is more strength and energy in this one," you say. But judge not hastily. We are told by Ruskin—one of those admirable writers with whom I am continually wanting to shake hands as I read—that in a hand-to-hand fight it is not *muscle* that fails first, but breath; and that the longest breathed will, on the average, be the victor, *not* the strongest; and so the race is not to the swift, but to the wise. The intensely energetic consume and utterly destroy their own strength by excess, as also "the inspired creature by its own fire."

"Why do you frown and look so glum, Adele?" inquired Ophelia, inspecting her companion serenely, as she sat staring moodily into the fire.

"Because I feel wicked and ugly."

"About what, Adele?"

"You ask that, when you know that upon to-morrow we are to be separated, in all probability forever!"

"To-morrow!" exclaimed the low, musical voice. "Why will not the foolish people accept the pleasures of to-day with gratitude and make the best of them, without grumbling about what may or may not happen on the morrow? This perpetual foreboding overclouds and tarnishes everything."

"Oh, pshaw!" exclaimed the other, poking the fire vigorously, "it is well enough for you, whose future is so full of promise, to say that. You are not, like me, to part with your *all* to-morrow. Oh, Ophelia, I wish you *could* love me a little more!—I have nothing but *you* that I *can* love. You are my religion. (Oh, I know all you are going to say about idols of clay, and all that, so you needn't say it.) I *must* worship something, and you impress me more deeply than any other being, human or divine. Perhaps it serves me right that you will not be moved by my idolatry."

And this perhaps was the secret of the girl's unhappy temperament,—the intensity of her nature seldom found anything to match its fervor. No mere human love could satisfy her; and with such natures the passions are more destructive than life-giving, and bring more of pain than pleasure.

"I had hoped that you understood me by this time," said Ophelia, screening her eyes from the lamp-light. "You know how hard it is for me to give expression to my feelings,—unless it is *forced* from me."

She arose, and, leaning an arm against the high, old-fashioned mantel, rested her head upon it and looked down into the fire. Adele, scanning the fair profile, saw a tear steal down her cheek,—tears, which were so unusual with Ophelia! All her doubts vanished.

"The shy, timid darling!" she exclaimed, slipping her arm about her waist. "Actually trembling at the thought of telling her old friend that she don't like her one little particle."

"No! no!" said Ophelia, laughing, and hiding her face upon her friend's shoulder. "You *know* that I love you, Adele, better than *any* one; so well that I can love no one else, you fill my heart so entirely."

"Flatterer!" exclaimed Adele, pinching her cheek, and looking quite radiant. "I *must* believe in you, however, for my own peace of mind."

They had already related all that had occurred to

each other during their separation. Ophelia, the pious innocent, who looked sublimely ignorant of this world's unholy ways, had no end of thrilling adventures to relate; while Adele, the unrighteous publican, was constrained to confess that nothing unusual had happened in her life; not even so much as a broken-hearted lover throwing himself away—to an heiress—or stabbing himself—with a paper-knife—upon her account. Indeed, she reluctantly made the mortifying confession that she had never had even so much as the shadow of a lover.

"Should you like to have one?" Ophelia inquired.

"Yes," said her friend, decidedly, "I *should*."

"You wouldn't like it," returned the other, shaking her head sagely. "They are such torments. They never want you to have any friend except themselves, nor go any place with any one else. And then they look into your eyes and make you feel strangely,—uncomfortable, I can tell you—especially if any one is by, to see you blush and look like a fool."

Adele laughed and patted her friend's back, as if she had been a pet kitten,—"I meant a *real* lover, dear, whom I should adore, and whom I should want perpetually by my side."

Ophelia shook her head and said that such existed only in books; that life was a commonplace affair, and full of annoyances; and the sooner we became reconciled to that fact the better.

"That we exist at all is a profound mystery to me," said Adele. "Sitting here alone, I sometimes fancy I can catch glimpses of my future. It is like a wondrous, ever-heaving sea, whose breakers gather strength and power as they advance to dash against my fragile life-boat. I look for a tossed and troubled voyage."

"What wild thoughts you have, Del! To me the future is a sealed book," said Ophelia, looking at her friend admiringly.

"You are so good, Ophelia, your life will be smooth

enough, no doubt. Satan himself could not misuse you. How they all loved you at school!—and how the teachers petted you and held you up as an example and a prodigy of goodness, until it is a wonder that we didn't hate, instead of love you! And, Ophelia, for all you got the credit of being so much the better student, I studied the hardest. Don't you know I did? Oh, yes, *your* life will be smooth enough,—it is easy to see that."

"Perhaps so," returned Ophelia carelessly. "I can make no pretensions to any sort of knowledge that is not arrived at by a safe round of *facts*. I have not your poetic wings with which to soar aloft into cloud-land."

"Oh, I can fly high enough, but to what purpose? My fancies, founded upon nothing, rear their insubstantial heads skyward and terminate in nothing. They only delude me into believing in them for the time, and then repay my credulity by tumbling about my head. How I hate this world sometimes!"

"I flatter myself," said Ophelia, "that you totally isolate me from your detested 'world;' and yet, Adele, you must know that there are many people in it quite as good, and many more who are much better than I."

"I doubt it," said Adele, with a grimace. "No one has ever impressed me with so much of a desire to be good. But that is only that there might be no missing link of sympathy between us. If we could always be together, I think it likely that I might become *moderately* good; or at any rate, a little less bad."

"I am glad to hear you say that," returned Ophelia, rising and shaking down her bright wavy hair, "as you are to go home with me to-morrow. Mamma said I was not to come back without you."

An eager look flashed into Adele's countenance, but faded immediately. "I cannot go, I fear," she returned, sadly.

"Oh, but you *must*! There is nothing to keep you here, and there is much to take you home with me.

Only think, Adele, a whole winter of evenings like this!"

"Why didn't you tell me before? I have nothing to wear, and no time to get anything ready."

"Why?" returned Ophelia, with a laugh. "Because I knew you would be busy all the time I was here, and I'd have no sort of a visit. Besides, mamma said I was to tell you to wait until you came to the city to make any alterations in your wardrobe. She keeps a seamstress employed by the year, and just now there is nothing for her to do, which annoys ma terribly."

"How lucky!" exclaimed Adele, always ready to shirk work. "And I can take Fan's new suit and Gertie's hat,—pa can get them others,—and I have a nice cloak and two new merinos, and pa must give me a hundred dollars,—I won't have a cent less. Will that do, Ophelia?"

"Certainly," replied Ophelia, inclined to drop the subject. But the thought was too new and exciting to Adele to be disposed of so hastily. And when the wardrobe was exhausted, there were yet other things to be discussed.

"And I shall have the opportunity of judging between your two favorites, Mr. North and Hal Ripley. I'll not like either of them, I know; and you don't love either of them, though you may fancy that you do."

"I know that I do not, but I shall have to marry one of them nevertheless. I don't know which yet."

"Only hear with what reverence she speaks of marriage!" exclaimed Adele, addressing an imaginary audience. "Don't you know which you like the best?"

"Not yet," was the placid reply.

"I suppose *love* is entirely out of the question?" said Adele.

"I *cannot* love, Adele,—it is not in me."

"You have never *been* loved,—that is all," said Adele.

"Never been loved!" exclaimed Ophelia, amazedly.

"It is not that you lack the capability of loving," said Adele. "You have never come in contact with one as capable of the grand passion as yourself. Why need you marry at all?"

"Oh, every one marries," returned the city girl. "It is the way of the world, and my good parents would never be satisfied if I did not. I suppose you know that I am only an adopted child, Adele?"

"Yes, you told me at school."

"My real parents," continued Ophelia, "were poor but cultivated. My father was an artist. He was a conscientious artist, devoted to his profession, and so constituted that he could not, if he would, slur his work. And so he spent his whole life upon a few pictures and died in poverty. I shall receive nothing from my adopted parents, because the property is entailed and cannot pass out of the family."

"Marriage, then, I suppose, is your only chance of life?" Adele's lip curled cynically.

"Yes," returned the other, with a sigh. "It is my only chance."

"And is the world so scarce of men that you are of a necessity pinned down to the choice between two?"

"All the men of the world are not at my command, Adele. My parents have signified their approval of these two,—or at least mamma has, which amounts to the same; and I would not readily be forgiven if I rejected such opportunities for providing for myself."

"You shall marry neither of them if I can help it. Hal Ripley is a conceited puppy,—if he *is* a banker's son; and Mr. North, if he *has* a heart at all, it is as hard as the gold he worships. Despite your fine descriptions, and your glossings over, you could not keep the truth from shining through your varnish."

"Evidently I have *not* flattered my lovers," said Ophelia, looking slightly piqued.

"Oh, I wish you need not marry at all!" exclaimed

Adele. "How happy we might be together all our lives if that were possible."

Now, John, I do not like the curl of your lip, nor that skeptical look. Sir, you may look surprised or scornful or bored to death, if you please, but you must never look as if you doubted my word. I require that you swallow the whole of this story as *truth*—in the abstract. These people all *lived*,—these friendships and loves *were;* and if my analysis of them is not correct, the fault is in me and not in the facts.

"Oh, milk and water, ye happy mixtures!" said the poet when all of his youthful attachments had "simmered out." But the unsoundness was in *him*. *I* have seen friendships that had grown up with the mental and physical being, that have endured through the storms of an adverse life, and then put forth their fairest blossoms above the grave, from whence "no love messages are ever whispered back." Tell *me* not "'tis but a name," and all that; though it is quite likely, John, when we have shaken hands at the conclusion of this story, and gone on our own separate ways, that you will soon have forgotten the small creature who led you through these scenes—occasionally mounting the rostrum and lecturing down from sublime altitudes of superiority—to your own high edification and improvement, and with whom you will have parted a little sadly and a little gladly. And yet, John, for all that I shall continue to believe in the truth of friendship.

CHAPTER IV.

MARSHALING THE FORCES.

By noon the next day we find the old hack from Jonestown standing at the front gate, and the young ladies in all the excitement of leave-taking. Mr. Hughes, being asked by his daughter for a hundred dollars, reluctantly counted out *fifty*, which she dashed upon the floor, declaring if she couldn't have *all* she would have none, and made as if she was taking off her things to stay at home,—whereupon the old gentleman rose to seventy-five. This being indignantly spurned, he finally produced the required sum, with the remark that she might make the most of it and save some to come home on, as it was all she would get,—which remark was lost on the dutiful daughter, who was engaged in making her adieus. The scene appeared to be a stale one, as no one seemed to take note of it,—unless it was Herve, who smiled somewhat cynically.

Mrs. Hughes exhibited signs of whimpering when her daughter kissed her good-by; but upon being exhorted by the exemplary young lady after her usual respectful manner, "For heaven's sake, ma, stop that blubbering! I hate deceit, and you know you're glad I'm going," suddenly desisted, with a final injunction to mind that she observed Lent and went to no parties during the forty days.

For three long hours they were thumped about in that unwieldy old hack, over a road that was a mere procession of cliffs, hinged together with ravines and gashed up with ruts that were like canals, in constant terror of being upset. The first mile was endured without complaint. Upon the second, Adele broke

forth rather viciously, "I wish to heaven the President and his cabinet had to be dragged over just such a road as this every day! It might stimulate them into taking a sort of interest in the public highways of the country they pretend to govern."

Ophelia replied according to her usual custom of defending the maligned,—that the government, she believed, *did* attend to the most important roads.

"Most important indeed!" exclaimed Adele, straightening herself from an awkward dash against the hack door,—"that is, the roads of the wealthiest people. This is not a poor country, it is fertile and productive; and if we could have assistance in making passable highways to connect with the rest of the globe, we would, in time, be prosperous."

Ophelia yawned. Roads were a subject of small interest to her. It is true she would have been glad had this one been a little less jagged; otherwise her mind was at rest upon that head.

"Here we are!" exclaimed Ophelia, as they drew up in front of the primitive station of Jonestown. And, seemingly in reply to this announcement, the grocer, the bar-keeper, the postmaster, six dogs, and several other nondescripts, made their appearance upon the scene.

Ophelia gave directions about their baggage, totally oblivious of the numerous audience, and then led the way into the waiting-room, where several persons were sitting.

Among these were two distinguished above their companions for the thoroughly metropolitan air of their vesture and bearing: an elderly gentleman, of ruddy, benevolent countenance, silvery hair, and somewhat inclined to corpulence, who read his paper with an appearance of deep interest, and a lady but little younger, whose finely-cut features, independent, unostentatious dress, and imperious bearing, proclaimed her a thorough-bred woman of society; not the gay butterfly

who cares only to float upon the wave of popularity and bask in the world's approving smiles, but the shrewd, keen diplomat, who uses society for purposes of triumph and rule.

As the impulsive country girl looked into the clear icy eyes, which coldly inspected her through gold-rimmed spectacles, she felt strongly impelled to run away and get beyond their reach. She felt sure that those dreadful eyes probed the dark spots of her character, and computed the full cost of her cheap outfit as well, and disapproved of the whole lot.

Ophelia introduced her friend—whose nonchalant air seemed to indicate entire indifference to the impressions she made—with great pride.

"And this is your great friend, Adele, of whom you have told us so much. Let me see if she is the wonderful creature you have represented her."

The old gentleman took off his spectacles, wiped them with his handkerchief, then replaced them, and looked steadily and sharply at the stranger. Adele was not at all disconcerted at this frank, open scrutiny, and laughed heartily at his dubious shake of the head and pretended perplexity as to what strange sort of a creature she might be.

Presently the iron horse, with a screech, clattered in, and when Mr. Berges had hustled his little flock on board, scampered away with its train of coaches at its heels. A few hours afterward they were mounting the steps of a three-story, slate-colored brick upon one of the most "genteel" squares in the city. There was a little square yard in front, with three stunted pine-trees in it. All the romance was banished to the rear, where was a pretty arbor, veiled with a tangled net-work of slender vines, some rustic seats, a fountain, now frozen, and some tall trees overshadowing the whole.

Ophelia ran up the steps, opened the door, and, taking a step into the hall, ran against a young gentleman who was just coming out.

"Halloo!—is it you, Ophelia? I've been waiting about an hour, and had at last concluded to go down to the depot to look for you."

He placed his fingers under her chin, and was evidently on the point of kissing her when the sight of Adele diverted his attention. The introduction which followed proclaimed the young gentleman to be "my cousin, Mr. Ripley."

"Aha! Mr. Ripley," was Adele's mental ejaculation. "I was not mistaken, I see; a sleek incarnation of selfishness, glossed over with the lustre of wealth and a pleasing address; acute where his own interests are concerned, otherwise obtuse."

They all went into the sitting-room, and Mr. Ripley depositing himself into the easiest chair within reach, drew Ophelia down beside him, and began an animated relation of all the events, of any interest to himself, that had occurred during her absence. Evidently he regarded Ophelia as his own individual property. As for Adele, he treated *her* as furniture; and after the first keen glance, his eye passed over her as a totally uninteresting object.

He was a young gentleman of moderate height and proportions, with dark, indolent eyes, a handsome set of teeth, lips well turned but pulpy, and a complexion that always had a flushed look.

"Where is Walter?" Ophelia inquired, when Mr. Ripley had come to a pause in his narration.

"Walt? Oh, he's back in the rear somewhere, working his 'sums.' Stay where you are; he'll be in presently."

But Ophelia did not wish to stay where she was. She wanted to find Walter; and notwithstanding his efforts to detain her, left her cousin for that purpose, which so incensed the young gentleman that he bade the others good-evening immediately and went sullenly into the street, banging the hall door after him.

Ophelia was not long in finding the object of her

search,—a boy of ten,—who was perched upon a table, with the cook and her aids clattering their dishes about him, figuring away at the "sums" with an awful frown upon his dimpled countenance. Walter was a gregarious lad, and opposed to solitude.

"Such a blamed old sum as that! I sha'n't bother over it any longer!" he exclaimed; and his slate took a hasty excursion across the room and landed in the slop-tub.

"Why, Walt! what's the matter?"

His face changed on the instant. "Oh, it's sister, and they've all come home!" he roared. And scrambling off the table, he ran and kissed her enthusiastically.

"What was that you were throwing across the room, Walt?"

The young gentleman hung his head. "Well, the old sum *wouldn't* come out right, all I could do."

"There could be but one reason for that," said Ophelia. "It was not worked right."

"Didn't I subtract the subtrahend from the minuend and divide the remainder by seven, and was that the answer?" he exclaimed, with the air of one who had propounded a "clincher."

"Eliza must wash the slate, and we'll try it over by-and-by," said his sister, and the two went back to the sitting-room together.

This was the sole heir of the Berges "house and name."

It may be, John, that you think this somewhat tedious. But have patience. First chapters, being introductory and descriptive, must of a necessity be tedious. They are but the prefatory marshaling of the forces. It is true, in some books the grand, crashing overture outrivals all that which follows; but for my part, I like better to grow upon your thoughts and affections by degrees. Impressions formed in that way are more lasting.

CHAPTER V.

THE "FASCINATING SCOUNDREL."

THE wind was whistling distractedly up and down the street, and some spiteful little snow was spitting at everybody, and melting on them and chilling them to the bone. But the fires blazed comfortably within, and the lights beamed with unusual complacence upon the two young ladies, who were practicing an oratorio, and laughing irreverently between the snatches.

"Mr. North," announced the porter, and the music and laughter suddenly ceased.

The gentleman who entered was rather elderly and rather "fine-looking": large-framed, without any superfluity of flesh, with a heavy white forehead, a dense, deep-set, iron-gray eye, and a flowing beard. A slight smile disturbed the settled gravity of his countenance as Ophelia arose, with a look of cordial welcome, to receive him.

His conversational powers were not brilliant. He made the conventional inquiries in regard to her health and her visit. After that he spoke on general and national topics. His remarks were addressed conjointly to the two young ladies, though Adele did not seem to consider it necessary to conceal her lack of interest in them. Ophelia exerted herself laboriously to ward off the dead silence which hovered threateningly over the group, and was evidently greatly relieved when "Mr. Waltman" was announced.

"Sid Waltman? Why, I thought he was in Europe!" exclaimed Mr. North, as a tall, swarthy, distinguished-looking gentleman entered the room.

"So I was," returned that gentleman; "but find-

ing it inconvenient to remain,—from strictly private reasons,—I returned some two or three days ago."

Having acknowledged his introduction to Miss Hughes by a profound bow, he continued: "They tell me, Miss Ophelia, that you have been rusticating in that howling wilderness which surrounds the thriving metropolis of Jonestown. There yet lingers in my mind some vague reminiscences of a youthful pilgrimage to those sacred regions. I suppose the natives have not yet succeeded in exterminating the bears and wolves from their interesting country?"

"Bears and wolves, indeed!" exclaimed Ophelia, with an uneasy glance at her friend.

"Oh, were they not bears and wolves? It is wild-cats then, I presume, from which the good people live in the utmost terror of their lives."

"I heard of no wild-cats there," said Ophelia.

"Perhaps my treacherous memory fails me, and it is only 'coons and 'possums which infest those parts. It is something ravenous, I remember."

"Take care how you revile Jonestown," said Mr. North; "Miss Hughes tells me she is from that place."

"From the hills *back* of Jonestown," corrected Miss Hughes.

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Waltman, with affected astonishment. "I should never have taken you for a country girl."

"I prefer to date from the hills," returned Adele, with the utmost composure, "which are natural formations, whereas Jonestown is a deformity and a disgrace to the country."

"I perceive you are a lady of taste and judgment," said Mr. Waltman, and forthwith transferred his attentions to Miss Hughes, with the laudable intention of amusing himself, whatever might be the consequences.

I wish I could present this character as forcibly to your mind as it exists in mine. But you must have seen him many times, and under various phases, to enable

you to comprehend truly the peculiar force and strength of his mingled good and bad qualities. However, I can sketch you a simple portrait, and hereafter you may read from the record of his actions and judge for yourself.

As I have said, he was tall and dark. A stealthy black eye (yes, *stealthy* is the word), which seldom looked at you openly, but glanced covertly through long black fringes which swept a full olive cheek; an elegant nose with slender nostrils, a full, voluptuous mouth surmounted by a silken moustache; a jaw a trifle heavy but still graceful and rounded, with a firm, decisive chin; a handsome head, whose black and slightly waving locks were brushed low upon the forehead and swept back from the temples, and a manner that, for perfect composure, was a triumph of art. With this striking and seductive physique and smooth, courtier-like address, is it to be wondered that Sidney Waltman obtained an easy *entrée* into any circle?

I do not know what these two young people talked about. The conversation must have been a peculiar one, as both persons were very dissimilar from the generality of young people. Adele, I remember, seemed unusually indifferent as to whether she pleased or displeased; and Mr. Waltman, from the occasional flash of his black eyes, I judged to have been slightly piqued. He had not found the "country girl" as amusing as he had anticipated. At any rate, both turned readily at the sound of the piano, and listened throughout Ophelia's playing with profound attention.

Ophelia was a good musician. There was that in the first note she struck which secured the attention. Her touch was deliberate and decided. No hurrying, no hesitancy; nothing to interrupt the smooth flow of rippling harmony; now rumbling along the bass, now crashing among the strong middle notes and again gliding away amid mazy intervolutions, to the extremes of the scales, the supple fingers seemed gifted with the spirit of heaven-enchanted harmony.

"Music," it is said, "is an intellectual or a sensual pleasure according to the temperament of him who hears it." Sidney Waltman was a sensualist of the first water. He adored music,—thrilling, impassioned music, such as pattered from beneath Ophelia's fingers. His black eyes widened and expanded with quickened emotion. To him it was a drunken revel, which extinguished all power of thought, and lifted him into an elysium of dreams. When the stream of harmony had ceased to flow, and while Mr. North complimented the performer upon her proficiency, Sidney Waltman turned to Adele with the petulant exclamation, "I wish to heaven there was no such thing upon this earth as music!"

"Why?" inquired Adele in some surprise.

"Because it creates a hunger which it cannot satisfy," he replied. "It is an empty mockery, a delusion. Who can grasp its beauty so as to satisfy his soul? It is a satire on the hollow pleasures and fuming vanities of this earth. Music makes me unhappy, but I have a morbid passion for being made unhappy. Now, Miss Hughes, I *know* you sing, and I will take no excuse."

"I have made none as yet," said Adele, but without moving.

"You are right, Mr. Waltman," said Ophelia, "only you cannot imagine how well Adele sings until you have heard."

"My imagination is not excessively strong," returned Mr. Waltman, "and I hope Miss Hughes will have mercy on my feeble constitution, and save me from the endeavor to enforce upon my mind what her singing may be like."

Miss Hughes made no reply to this grandiose speech, further than to take up the guitar and begin tuning it. She looked serious, almost solemn, and every one listened in silent expectancy for the coming burst of melody. It came, and every one started in astonishment as the unmistakable nasal twang of the African

voice fell upon their fastidious ears in that lugubrious strain,—

> "All de darkeys hab cleared out, and gone to rest,
> And eb'ry ting am still,
> Except de pulberations ob dis breast
> Dat am clippin, clappin, like a mill," etc.

The imitation could not have been better. Mr. North actually *laughed*, a thing he had not done for years, and which I think he deeply regretted the moment after. As for Ophelia, she was convulsed, but Sidney Waltman sat as imperturbable as a statue. He did not ask her to sing again, and soon took his departure, followed by Mr. North. He declined that gentleman's invitation to go "his way," said "he had to go up-town," so they parted at the gate. He went "up-town," but did not enter a single place until he reached his boarding-house about two hours later.

It was no unusual thing for Sid to walk the streets until the night was far spent, without any apparent object in view.

Though he loved his pleasure so well, he was ambitious and loved power better. He was a lawyer, an embryo politician, and a hard student. Rambling thus solitarily at night, he felt his inner vision to be clearer and his thoughts less shackled by outward things.

But to-night his mind rejected all serious thought. He was possessed by a fantasy. "I have never before seen such a woman," was his thought. "She moves me out of myself. She takes hold of my fancy irresistibly and despite all resistance."

Hitherto he had entertained himself with taking captive the hearts of vain and silly women, simply as a pleasurable exercise of power. But this one: what an eye! it was like a detective, and seemed to penetrate into the innermost recesses of his soul, and to exhume from the rubbish of selfish desires and ambitions the few honest, worthy qualities he possessed. In the light

which she cast upon his life, its past aims seemed unworthy. To-night he felt his first earnest desire for nobility of soul.

And what a mouth! he could not read the subtle tracery of its lines and curves. There *was* tenderness, he was sure, but there was also mockery. He felt that she could lavish love and scorn upon the same object. Half divinity, half elf,—he adored this compound of good and evil that answered to his own nature. There were few things too high for her comprehension, and few too fearful for her undertaking.

"She is poor, of course," he reflected, "or she would be bedecked with jewels; it is the way of the women. Oh, it is not to be thought of, Sid. She would be a clog, though a splendid one. She would absorb at least half your mind, and *more* than half your income. You must go there no more."

And when he had formed that resolution he was displeased with it. "Only a coward flies at mere sight of the enemy. The strong and courageous remain and fight out the battle, though there are odds against him. Wait until you see her fairly in the whirlpool of fashionable life. Mrs. Berges will train her. See her in hot pursuit of a fortune,—old Major Boynton for instance. Mrs. Berges always had a hankering after his bank account. She would have secured it for Ophelia, only Ophelia objected to the immense encumbrance,—that is the major; and, besides, she was not flashy enough to suit his tastes. But to this superb piece of flesh—about the only entirely natural formation to be found in the city—he will succumb instanter, and be ready to deliver up the keys of his chest without demur. Let him buy her with his gold, if he can; but, by heavens! she shall feel somewhat of my power first. She has no fear of it. She looks at me with a cool impudence that takes half the strength out of me. I actually feel a diminution of power in her presence. I have found my equal at last. Shall I turn and fly

like a coward? Shall I rest content with easy victories over my inferiors?"

That question was its own answer. Placing it in that light created a necessity for disproving it. Sid's mind worked to-night under a high pressure of excitement. Among all his strong qualities was one stronger than all—the power of passion; such as, if rightly directed, would purify, strengthen, and elevate his nature; if wrongly directed, would tend to debase, to weaken, and to desolate. The fire which was to refine and purify the dross, or to utterly consume the gold of his nature, had sprung into sudden flame.

"How do you like our visitors?" inquired Ophelia, as they sat alone in their chamber. "Do not you think Mr. Waltman a fascinating gentleman?"

"A fascinating scoundrel!" exclaimed Adele, with greater emphasis than the occasion seemed to justify.

"He has the reputation of being a notorious heart-breaker," continued Ophelia.

"A fig for the heart that he could break," said Del, scornfully.

"And Mr. North?"

"Mr. North possesses about as much capability of feeling as Aaron's golden calf."

"And yet," said Ophelia, "I have seen him display great kindness toward the weak and suffering."

"Policy!—he knew the effect it would have on you."

"No; but I have heard of other instances than those which came under my own observation."

"Mere physical sympathy then. Brutes are capable of such goodness as that. Mr. North is as near a mere machine as any human being I have yet come across. There is nothing in him but the power of driving ahead at his own individual work. His conversations remind me of the songs of the bard of Shiraz, in which we are told 'the same beautiful thought occurs again and again in every possible variety of phrase.' I admire

simplicity I own, but not when it borders so closely upon dullness. Your greatest fault, Ophelia, is that you constantly underrate yourself, and give undue importance to others."

"And Ripley? you have not yet told me your opinion of Hal."

"Pardon me; but Mr. Ripley is shallow—very."

"He seems to have a sufficiency of feeling at least." Ophelia was unlacing her fancy kid boots, and did not look up as she made these inquiries.

"Violent, perhaps," returned the oracle; "but shallow nevertheless!"

You begin to open your eyes, I see, John; you are waking up; and to open your mouth, too,—to complain, I suppose. You do not think it fair that all heroes and heroines must needs be something extraordinary, and that there is no place in the pages of poesy and romance for commonplace people.

My dear John, are you commonplace? No, you cannot say that you are, at least to yourself you are not, nor to me, John. I confess that to me you are a very interesting, poetic personage, with many impenetrable cells in your heart, and many wonderful nooks in your brain. And so there are not many people in this world who are not mysterious to themselves, and wonderful to some other person. And where should I go to find a commonplace character?

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHRYSALIS DEVELOPS.

"INVITATIONS to Mrs. Buford's." Ophelia carelessly tossed the three large, imposing documents, which the porter had just handed her, into the card-basket without looking at them.

Adele took up the one addressed to herself with a feeling akin to awe. It was incased in two large, square envelopes, the inner one of a pale fawn color, and faintly odorous of musk. There were large initials on both envelope and invitation. A vista of elegant drawing-rooms, of costly toilettes, and sumptuous viands, to which this was the pass-word, opened before her mind.

"What shall you wear?" inquired Adele, tossing it back in the basket.

"Oh, I don't know," returned Ophelia, suppressing a yawn; "some of my old dresses, I suppose."

"You will get a new dress of course," said Mrs. Berges, who was employed in making some alterations in an old dress,—that is, one that had been worn about half a dozen times. "Mrs. Buford will tolerate nothing shabby. She gets up her parties at great expense to herself, and she expects her guests to employ the same rule in regard to their attire. She would scarcely forgive an old or untidy dress, if anything better were possible."

"*I* shall have to get a new dress, of course," said Del, "if I go."

"*If you go!* Of course you'll go, so we will discuss the dress. A green or canary-colored tarlatan with pretty trimmings would do. The gentlemen are said to be partial to tarlatan angels, they cost so little."

"It is a popular fallacy," said Mrs. Berges, "to suppose that the purchase of anything so flimsy and unsubstantial as tarlatan, however cheap, could be economy. One wearing would finish it, of course. If money is a consideration, Miss Hughes, you had better get something that can be worn on the street also; an inexpensive silk, for instance."

Mrs. Berges was a trained veteran in the matter of toilette, and no one ever thought of amending her propositions. She knew just how cheap a dress could pass muster at such a place, and just where the bounds of fashion might be overstepped with advantage. She knew, too, that Adele, with her singular beauty, would lose nothing, but rather gain, by a simple toilette, which would leave her real loveliness so apparent. And so the "inexpensive silk" was purchased and stylishly made; and when Adele swept into the room with its soft, pearl-gray folds falling gracefully about her tall, willowy form, there were none present who were not struck with her appearance.

There was something unusual in her strange, wild beauty. She wore no jewels, no ornaments, except the blush-rose in her dark hair, and narrow bands of pink velvet on her neck and wrists. She carried herself proudly erect, and the flame in her cheeks and the fire in her eyes drew more than one steady, scrutinizing gaze. Adele knew that she was handsome, and she knew the power of such beauty as hers over men. She knew, too, that she was no dolt, and could sustain and strengthen the impression which her beauty created, by her conversation. Besides, Adele possessed a certain constitutional composure which seldom, perhaps never, deserted her. Hence she looked over the sparkling sea of silks and laces and gauzy mists, whose undulating waves upbore hundreds of fair, angelic faces, unmoved and calm. To her it all seemed like a glittering dream.

They were late,—only a few coming after, among

whom was Mr. Ripley, the well-known banker's son. He paid his compliments to the host and hostess, and then began to look about him as if in quest of some one. He received plenty of smiles, bows, and pretty speeches right and left; but his eye roved restlessly over the crowd until its wandering glance fell upon the Berges party. He came forward immediately, and, with a comprehensive bow to the whole group, sat down by Ophelia, exhibiting no further consciousness of Adele's presence.

"What have you been sulking about, that you have not been up?" inquired Ophelia, with a slight smile.

"I have been busy," said Mr. Ripley, evasively.

"Busy?" and Ophelia laughed,—a soft, derisive laugh. "Mr. North and Sid Waltman called Tuesday evening. You should have been there to hear Adele sing them a comic song."

"North, I suppose, was inexpressibly shocked?"

"No, he seemed amused,—he actually laughed."

"Indeed! I had not thought him capable of it. He has less sense of humor about him than any human being I ever saw. Sid, I suppose, affected to be highly amused?"

"No, Mr. Waltman looked unusually serious,—*dull*, in fact."

At this juncture Ophelia looked up and perceived the object of her last remark but a few feet from her. He promenaded leisurely past, with a bejeweled little beauty upon his arm, without even a glance toward them.

"I wish you would dance, Ophelia," said Ripley, regretfully. "There is no pleasure at a party unless you dance. Do you dance, Miss Hughes?"

"I do," briefly responded Miss Hughes.

"The round dances?"

"Yes, even the round dances," was the withering rejoinder.

"Very well," returned Mr. Ripley, not in the least

disconcerted, "we'll have a schottische or mazourka after awhile."

"Will we, indeed?" was Miss Hughes's mental response; "we'll see whether we will or not. I'd sit here all night first."

Two gentlemen coming up just then were presented to Miss Hughes, and immediately set up a chorus of entreaties that she would dance. Miss Hughes declined for the present, but encouraged them to hope that she might be prevailed upon after awhile; and so beguiled them with her beauty, and her nimble tongue, that the young exquisites tarried indefinitely. Later in the evening, she discovered Mr. Waltman at her elbow. How long he had been there listening to her flighty chat with Messrs. Hart and Smith she neither knew nor cared.

"I have come for you," he said. "Can you listen to that waltz, and sit here talking to these two dummies? Come on, they've had you long enough."

His familiar, free and easy manner was too natural and boyish to be offensive, and Adele felt a strong desire to go with him.

"Go, if you wish," said Ophelia, seeing her hesitate. "You have been sitting here all evening, and I know you must be tired. These rejected individuals shall not complain."

The "rejected," who had fallen back at Sid's first appearance, declared themselves resigned. Ophelia took Mr. North's arm for a promenade, and Adele accompanied Mr. Waltman to the ball-room.

It was impossible that Adele should appear in a ball-room without creating a sensation. Its voluptuous, *unreal* atmosphere suited her. She delighted in gay scenes, in dancing and excitement. Here was a field in which she could win the admiration and the exciting power she coveted. She entered upon it with the regal look and bearing of a crowned queen.

"Who is she?" "Who is she?" made the circuit of the room till it reached Sid's "bejeweled little beauty."

"Who?" she exclaimed, in a tone loud enough to be overheard by all around her. "Why, just nobody,—from the hills back of Jonestown,—the very fag-end of the world."

Adele, like most devotees of the dance, disdained the cotillion and participated only in the "round dances," to the intense horror of all the respectable dowagers.

"Just look at that girl, will you?" said one. "This is the fifth time she has waltzed with Sid Waltman."

"Sid is having his fun," said another. "When he gets Miss What's-her-name to the topmost pinnacle of ecstasy, he'll give her such a fall that she won't have the least idea where she is."

"Yes," said a third, "I've seen them go that way by the score. Sid is a regular lady-killer."

"This one is not likely to 'go that way,'" said a gentleman standing by,—no other than Sid's accomplished bachelor uncle, who had been a "lady-killer" in his time, and must know. But then it might be that he felt a slight degree of envy for his successful nephew, and *that*, it must be confessed, disturbs the equilibrium of one's opinions.

But Mr. Waltman *was not* having it all "his way" as much as was imagined. And the shrewd way in which she "turned the tables" on him and amused herself, while it irritated his vanity, raised within him a genuine feeling of respect. Del's greatest power of attraction lay in her indifference to the opinions of others,—not assumed, but real, genuine indifference. And upon people who are not used to having their opinions made a matter of no consequence it acted as an irritating stimulant toward seeking the means with which to soothe their vanity, by exciting in her mind a higher sense of their importance.

For once, Sid was interested. She was a strange girl and full of surprises. She never said or did anything that he expected her to say or do, and that was new.

Flirtation was becoming as a thrice-told tale to Sid. He could always tell when they would droop their eyes and blush, and where they would pretend to be indignant, and so on to the end. But Miss Hughes evidently had not made the art of flirtation a study, and refused to go through the expected manœuvres. Instead, she made him ashamed of his soft speeches by her blunt matter-of-fact answers, and finally constrained him to talk common sense.

When she declared herself tired of dancing, he conducted her to the parlor and requested a song. He expected a brusque refusal, and was somewhat alarmed at her ready assent. She sang no comic song this time, but the old, old "Vale of Chamouni," that every one had thought worn threadbare. But who had ever heard it sung like that? How her clear, strong voice rang throughout the rooms! It was like the wild, care-free carol of the birds, and you know how little there is of striving after effect and expression in the wood-choristers' song.

"Come, do not sing any more," said Sid, when she was through and the people began to crowd around her.

She took his arm without a question, or the slightest indication of surprise or disappointment.

"I do not want your voice to become common property," he explained as they left the room, upon which an involuntary silence had fallen.

"Pray, upon what right do you presume to monopolize it?" she inquired.

"The right of discovery," was the reply. "I shall send you some music to-morrow that I want you to learn."

"Indeed! at how much per week do you propose to engage me?"

"The thought that you are lifting a miserable fellow-creature into the seventh heaven ought to be a sufficient remuneration."

Adele invariably allowed such flattering speeches to pass unheeded, and this one received no response. A few minutes after, they received a summons to the cloak-room. Mrs. Berges never stayed late. "The secret of enjoying parties," she had said, "consists in getting away before your enjoyment begins to wane;" and upon all social questions Mrs. Berges was considered good authority. Sid accompanied Adele to the carriage and bade her good-night with great empressement.

"You did very well," said Mr. Berges, as they were driving toward home. "You made a decided hit; but do not feel puffed up upon that account. You will find society a fickle patroness, and another time you may be reduced to the necessity of sitting against the wall and backbiting your rivals."

I have an idea, John, that you do not care for parties, and that you consider dancing a foolish and perhaps sinful amusement. I am not prepared to argue the question with you, but leave that subject to those who have made it a matter of deeper investigation than I have. However, I am not inclined to believe it a matter of utter impossibility to make of dancing an entirely spiritual exercise, fit for the angels in heaven. It is not the *act* itself, John, but the *purpose* which lies beneath; and while I think the world might dispense with parties and dancing, perhaps with advantage, I also believe that they are the source of less evil than is generally supposed. It is not for me to decide which is the more criminal,—dancing or speaking evil of one's neighbors; but *I* should greatly prefer to have *my* neighbors employed in "tripping the light fantastic toe," as they are pleased to call it, than in riddling my character.

When the people of this world have become angelic, John, then we need not fear to allow them whatever employment or amusement they may choose to engage in. In the present state of human affairs, amusement of some kind is absolutely necessary, as a relaxation

for the overworked, as a safe outlet for a superabundance of vivacity which might otherwise work mischief, and for the dissipation of morbid fancies which dog the steps of the student and of the recluse. But I cannot presume to select the sort of amusement that is calculated to do the most good or the least harm. These people presumed to select for themselves, and there is nothing left for me but to follow them to the end, and nothing for you, John, but to go with me.

CHAPTER VII.

SINGED WINGS.

So far as the inner life was concerned, our two heroines made but little progress throughout this season, and yet it seemed abundant with matter of interest. Their mornings were occupied with lounging, reading, and idle discussions upon the "logic of events," or the newest book; the afternoons in loitering through picture-galleries, shopping, and promenading the most fashionable streets (oftentimes dropping into a restaurant to partake of shell-oysters and hot coffee, or perhaps charlotte russe and wine).

The gaze of the passer-by always followed Adele. She flashed upon the vision like a splendid apparition, and it must have been hard indeed for well-bred people to pass her without turning to look again. But when there was a favor wanted Ophelia was always the one to whom the appeal was made. Timid servant-girls in search of a place, the ignorant or the stranger wanting information, alike received the kindest attention. And often she had stopped the carriage to take in a woman or child out of the rain.

"Will ye be so kind as to til me where Mrs. Washt

lives, on this sthrate?" said a tired-looking laundress with a heavy basket on her arm.

Ophelia shook her head. She knew no "Mrs. Washt" any place.

But on the next square she interrupted Adele's account of the last night's ball with, "I wonder if she could have meant Mrs. West?"

"What are you talking about, Ophelia?"

"That woman; and she looked so tired. If you'll wait, Adele, I'll run back. I won't be gone long."

"Oh, where's the use?" exclaimed Adele, impatiently; "she'll find it in the course of time."

"But it may be that her time is precious; it must be more so than mine. And that basket was heavy."

Sure enough it was Mrs. West, and the tired creature was spared an afternoon's perambulation with a thirty-pound weight upon her arm.

"Why do you take so much trouble for such people?" inquired Adele, when she had returned.

"Because their lives are hard, and mine is easy. And it is my pleasure, as well as duty, to be kind to those whom Providence has seen fit to station below me in this life. Wherefore should the differences of grade exist, but to keep the hearts of human-kind tender and warm with generosity upon one side and gratitude upon the other?"

"You are an angel, Ophelia, if there is one upon this earth," said Adele. "You find good where no one else would think of looking for it."

And although Ophelia denied profusely that there was anything angelic about her, she half-way believed it herself. Everybody said she was good, and should she presume to set *her* opinion against that of the world?

On *this* subject, yes, Ophelia, for the world has not the opportunities for judging that you have. Besides, "there is none good; no, not one."

Only once was there an attack made on Adele's chari-

table inclinations, and that was by a pert little beggar,—one of the professionals,—who had scarcely commenced to chant her heart-rending tale of "dead father, sick mother, starvation, and seven small children," when a brisk tap from Adele's parasol and a sharp injunction to "stop her lying and mend her ways before the devil got her" brought it to an abrupt termination. The thought of asking sympathy or assistance from such a brilliant "bird of paradise" was not likely to occur to the really distressed. There are some people who seem made only for the enjoyments of life. And yet they have their secret burdens.

When all the round of lounging, shopping, and visiting was performed, there was the inevitable evening entertainment toward which the surfeited pleasure-seekers looked forward with extreme reluctance and distaste. The tediousness of these heavy affairs Adele oftentimes shirked by slipping off with Sid for a promenade beneath the combined light of the moon and street-lamps. What glowing hours were those! But as often she was accompanied by Sid's cynical uncle, or the opulent and corpulent Major Boynton, the richest man in L——.

This ponderous Crœsus had become peculiarly marked in his attentions, which the dashing country beauty always received with apparent complacency. The nimble tongues of the city gossips wagged industriously over it. But who saw the diplomatic hand of Mrs. Berges, the judicious thorough-bred favorite of society, in this affair? If that cool, self-possessed lady had a passion, it was for match-making. She trafficked in orange-wreaths as Napoleon did in crowns. Her wary eye measured at a glance the worth of beauty or genius, and unbiased by prejudice she disposed of them according to their rank. Her assignment of Adele to the largest fortune in the city designated her high estimate of her guest's rightful rank in society. She had perceived Sid's concealed and unwilling admiration of Adele

from the first; but Sid was poor, poor as the beggar who sat at Dives' kitchen-door, compared to his magnificent rival, who, having utilized the late civil war, had come out of the gory conflict covered with glory and spoils, miraculously preserved from a single scratch, and settled down to a life of luxurious ease and deathless fame.

Ophelia had disappointed her accomplished mamma in this one thing, she had no social ambition, no taste for triumph and display. In her most elegant toilette she would stroll about through neglected galleries and enjoy herself unobtrusively, unmindful of the true purpose of costly vesture, the filling of one's associates' hearts with envy and bitter dissatisfaction with their own less pretending array. She could do nothing with Ophelia, who would as soon talk to any clerk upon five hundred as the most "bloated aristocrat" of the day.

But the gay season at length drew to a close. A grand entertainment given by Mrs. Harper, one of the grandees of the city, would terminate the winter's festivities with one final, triumphant blast. Such an avalanche of domestic revolutions as preceded that party! How papas growled and swore they would be ruined; how daughters pouted and mammas persisted! And then to see the serene angels sweetly beaming in their new clothes at the party? I wonder there are not *more* Diogenes hiding from the contemptibleness of humanity in the secure obscurity of tubs. (A goods box, however, strikes me as being a decided improvement upon the old tub plan, which I suggest for the benefit of the disgusted modern cynic.)

"I wonder if the wild rose of Jonestown is to grace the festivities to-night?" The slightly ironical tone of the speaker indicated his knowledge of human nature, and of the proper method for pleasing his lady companion.

"Of course Miss Hughes will be here," was the

contemptuous rejoinder. "She never misses, if she's invited. I wonder if she'll have on her pearl-colored silk again; I have never seen her in anything else."

As she concluded, the object of her remark entered the room in company with Mr. Waltman. No, she did not have on her "pearl-colored silk"; but horrors! she had on a white grenadine that had cost about twenty-five cents a yard! The young ladies in silks and laces elevated their noses contemptuously as Miss Hughes passed serenely on, looking provokingly stylish and fine, and no more concerned than if she strolled amid no higher surroundings than the rugged hills of Jonestown. Evidently she was no respecter of persons. And now that the gloss of newness had worn off, and she began to perceive of what inferior material the body of society was composed, scorn was added to her indifference.

It was absolutely hideous to an æsthetic nature to see how some of these "society women" would "stab and dirk" each other, simply from a cruel enjoyment in witnessing the pain of their victims. These narrow-minded creatures were cruel simply from lack of intellectual development. They had not the capacity for looking beyond their own desires, or entering into the sufferings they caused. Men, I believe, are seldom guilty of these petty vices; their misdemeanors are generally upon a larger scale.

Despite the harsh criticism of the feminine portion of *le beau monde*, Adele was immensely popular with the gentlemen, which was the source of further sneering. "Miss Hughes did not care for the admiration of her own sex." And suppose she did not, Mrs. Grundy; have you given her a reason to prize it as an inestimable boon? It is natural for woman to like men better than her own sex, because they possess the qualities which she does not, and which she consequently admires above all others, and the man who does not like women is an unnatural monster.

"Show me the celebrities," said Adele, as they wandered through the rooms; for some of the "lions" of the city, who seldom came out from their lairs, were to be present upon this occasion. "But first let me try if my critical eye can detect them."

Her eye wandered over the crowd. "There! that gentleman with the flowing hair and mournful dark eyes, leaning upon the piano, and looking excessively bored—a poet, I imagine!"

"What, with the scarlet necktie and hair parted in the middle?"

"Yes; he has a look as if set apart, and at variance, from the surrounding crowd."

"You are right," and Sid laughed maliciously. "He *is* a celebrity—in his way."

"I knew it!" exclaimed Adele, triumphantly; "and what is his way?"

"Cock-fighting. It is said he has the finest collection of game-cocks in the city."

"A chicken-fighter!" exclaimed Adele, in amazement. "And is *that* the style of your celebrities?"

"By no means. This young man is the son of a retired nabob, and, being left to the selection of his own amusements, selected cock-fighting. He is an amateur of course, and only exhibits for the amusement of his own select circle."

"I was not aware," returned Adele, "that there existed people, grown-up people, who could take pleasure in such exhibitions."

"How behind the times!" exclaimed Sid. "How rusty you country folks are, never to have heard of the cock-pits and game fighters!"

"Well, what celebrity is this: another chicken-fighter?"

A handsome young gentleman, with a rakish, free-and-easy air, and a scowl upon his broad white brow, slouched past, with a pretty lady on his arm.

"No doubt you are as familiar with that gentleman's

name as with your own," returned Sid. "It is H——, the song-writer."

"Indeed! who would suppose there was any melody behind that frown? And this other Napoleonic-looking individual, who is he? A philosopher, at least!"

"He is a man of even less intellect than your abhorred cock-fighter. A regular good-for-nothing milk-sop, if you will excuse the expression. Popular with the ladies though, as you may see."

"I shall give up trying to judge any one by their physiognomy," said Adele. "There is nothing in expression."

"There is everything in expression," returned Sid. "You rely too much upon striking shapes and colors. A large forehead does not constitute a man of genius, nor do a pale complexion and sombre eyes make a poet."

"Literary people ought to wear badges, so as not to be mistaken for ordinary mortals," said Adele.

"Or their publisher's trade-mark," added Sid. "I suppose you knew that these literary people are, each of them, let out or leased to some editor or publisher, and produce at stated intervals or on demand, like machines."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Adele. "How curious! I always thought people only wrote when they had something to say."

"Oh, dear, no!" Sid replied, with a highly amused look at his victim. "They write under the pressure of necessity. I have seen our young politician yonder —that heavy-set young man with the florid countenance —with his head soaking in wet rags and a hot brick to his feet, writing furiously and drinking champagne cock-tails at intervals, to get up an inspiration. I've thought of trying it myself, some time."

"I always thought an unclouded mind and a clear understanding the best inspiration one could have," said Adele.

"What's the use in having a mind if you can't turn it to some account? And it takes these editors and publishers to spur one's wits. For instance, you receive a telegram, 'Wanted, an article on Napoleon III.—abusive.' Suppose you are entirely uninformed as to the character of Napoleon III. and are possessed of a vague sort of sympathy for that unfortunate monarch, does that exempt you from your duty? Never! You go to a public library, tear down all the late works on France, collect every whisper against your victim, magnify each, add a few original invectives of your own, bundle them neatly, and post them to your editor. And then to hear yourself designated as the talented young author of that able article on Napoleon! But for the editor, you would never have been the talented author of that able article."

"But suppose an imaginative article is wanted?"

"Oh, that requires different treatment," was the ready rejoinder. "If a 'blood and thunder' piece is wanted, eat fresh pork or veal-pie for your supper, or sleep on a leathern hammock as Victor Hugo is said to do, and the fevered vision will not be long in making its appearance. Or you might adopt the plan of De Quincey and other illustrious writers, and eat opium or hasheesh. A still more common method is imbibing moderate potations of brandy and water."

"Alas!" sighed Adele, "are there no truly great?"

"What nonsense is that Sid is telling you?" inquired Sid's uncle, whose proximity they had not before observed.

"Only about our literary people," said Adele, and recounted all that Sid had been telling her.

"You don't mean to say that you believe all Sid tells you? Let me warn you in time, Miss Hughes, that my nephew's word is not quite as reliable as the laws of the Medes and Persians. There *was* an English author, years ago,—Smart, I believe his name was,—who actually leased himself to a pub-

lisher for the term of ninety-nine years, the only case on record. And there *are* a few contributors to second-rate periodicals who use artificial means for stimulating their sluggish minds. Sid himself may be one of them, for aught I know."

Adele looked mortified, but the incorrigible Sid hastened to assure her that all his uncle's knowledge of literary folks was from books, whereas *his* was from actual experience. "Besides," he added, in a pretended aside, "my uncle is terribly jealous of me, and would be glad if I should take the smallpox, or anything, to spoil my beauty and popularity."

Adele looked indignantly at Sid, but made no reply.

"I should think Miss Hughes must be quite tired of you by this time," said Mr. Beckworth. "Why don't you take her into the ball-room and give her some chance of enjoying herself?"

"My dear uncle, Miss Hughes has been surfeited with enjoyment; all she wants now is a little bodily nourishment and the continued attendance of her humble servant, your devoted nephew."

Adele looked straight before her, as if she was in no way concerned in the conversation, and the three entered a large room where were some fifty or sixty persons seated at small round tables, waited upon by a corps of well-drilled, noiseless waiters. The two gentlemen were very facetious and the young lady soon recovered her good humor, and now and then applauded with a clear ringing laugh. Gradually the attention of the whole room seemed to converge upon this party, who enjoyed themselves regardless of observation.

While they were thus engaged a lady touched Adele on the shoulder, and leaning over whispered in her ear.

"Reported?" returned Adele, indifferently, though her color deepened: "do you know, Mrs. Fairfax, I scarcely ever stop to listen to reports? If I gave heed

to all the idle gossip that is afloat about me, I should have my hands full."

"I should think so, for some one is always saying something disagreeable about you," said the other, maliciously.

"It is envy," returned Adele, "pure envy,—because I am a little better looking and more popular than they. If they only knew it, every envious or malicious speech only augments *my* popularity and *their* insignificance."

Mrs. Fairfax admitted the soundness of her reasoning and passed on. "What have I done to that woman, that she should torment me, as she does upon every available occasion?" inquired Adele, in an injured tone.

"Flirted with her husband?" suggested Mr. Beckworth.

"The foolish woman;—what could I possibly want with her silly husband? I am not altogether the 'pink of propriety,' but I should be worse than a fool to fall in love with another woman's husband, or have a wish for another woman's husband to fall in love with me. Though I confess to a liking for sensible married men. Their morals are generally in better repair than is the case with you free-and-easy bachelors whom nobody lectures or keeps under vigilant watch-care."

"Mr. Fairfax should be a saint then," returned Sid, "if curtain-lectures and a 'vigilant watch-care' tends to improve one's morals."

"Mr. Fairfax is an impertinent ape!" returned Adele, whose strong language was admirably adapted to set the delicate nerves of fastidious city-bred dames upon the rack, though but few *gentlemen* had been known to complain of it. "Now, Mrs. Harper's husband is capital, jolly, entertaining, and good-humored; and she's not a bit stingy with him. But Fairfax!—I wish you could hear him prate about his domestic infelicities—which could not possibly be the least interesting to any one but himself; and his longings for a con-

genial mate, such as the lady he is, at the time, speaking to, for instance."

"The fool!" exclaimed Sid, "I wish I could hear him at that. I'd give him a pressing invitation to hold his tongue. I never liked the man."

"This city is peculiar for but one thing," said Adele in a generalizing tone, as if she had viewed nigh all the cities in the universe, "that is, tattling."

At this juncture Ophelia and young Ripley, the banker's son, entered and seated themselves at an adjoining table. "Mr. Waltman," said Ophelia, "Mrs. Harper is looking for you. Their drama is about to fail; Miss Fischer is sick of the measles and could not come; and Mrs. Harper wishes you, Adele, to take her place. I told her you would."

"But I don't know the part," said Adele.

"Oh, you can soon learn it," exclaimed Sid. "It is not difficult, and we have an hour yet," looking at his watch. "The measles!—how lucky! of course Miss Fischer couldn't be expected to come with the measles, and the company is saved from the heaviest piece of acting that was ever put upon the boards. Come, let's away to Mrs. Harper. This promises to be entertaining."

They were received by an anxious looking group. The matter was re-explained, the costumes exhibited, and Miss Hughes presented to the talented young author, and the remainder of the talented company, en masse. A glance at the elegant pile of peach-blossom silk and Mechlin lace, and the thought of Miss Fischer's fury when she should learn who wore it, decided Adele. That young lady had said too many spiteful things about her not to deserve punishment at her hand. So thought Adele; and she took the play, glanced over it, and said she would take the part, in so decided and self-assured tone, that the dramatic corps revivified.

After half an hour's seclusion she presented herself

ready for a rehearsal. I cannot remember the details of the drama; but Adele had the part of a gay, fashionable belle, who was represented as having a *real*, throbbing heart (instead of an electrified india-rubber concern) beneath her silken boddice; whose trials and misfortunes are marvelous, but tending to inner development; and who finally triumphs over the sardonic machinations of her enemies and secures the crowning blessings of life, a tremendous fortune and a splendid husband: which latter part was nobly represented by Mr. Sid Waltman.

"Here," remarked Sid, when the end was attained, "I shall have to kiss you. Not that *I* care in the least about it, but such are the instructions, and Miss Fischer performed it in that way."

"*One* performance of that part will suffice," returned Adele, coldly.

He looked at her with some curiosity: she did not blush, nor laugh, nor display the least confusion. "Confound it!" he thought, "the girl is wooden surely."

Miss Hughes performed her part well, and astonished the audience, and even Sid, by her impassioned acting. Her whole heart was in it. Evidently she forgot everything but her part. And when Sid kissed her he felt that she was not thinking of *him* but of the character he represented; and Sid was vexed. But long afterward, and often in her waking visions, that light but warm pressure of his lips upon hers returned to her, and *then* it made itself felt; and Sid had his revenge. For from that time forth he went no more out of her thoughts.

Come, John,—suppose you turn your attention this way and quit looking out at the window. There is nothing out there but a few dun-colored houses, and a milk-wagon or two. I am not quite so renowned a beauty as Helen of Troy, nor a beauty at all for that

matter; but I candidly confess that I think myself better worth looking at than a landscape of brickwork. I am tired of prosing, John, and want to come down off my rostrum and sit by you and chat. I want to see how tired you are, and how much more of this you will endure without complaint. Three volumes, think you?

Ah! you are patient and good, and pretend to like my flighty chat. That is right, John. A smile will go further toward improving one, any day, than a frown. And when you say, "That does very well, mignon,—your author's cap becomes you well," I am not so foolish as to think myself already arrived at perfection and fitted to enter the lists with veterans; but rather a deeper sense of my deficiencies takes hold upon me and urges me to strive more earnestly to deserve your good opinion.

Not that I am so good,—oh, dear! no. Not that I am exempt from all those petty faults I have been palming upon the sex in general, nor any the less liable to error. If you should interrupt my story in the most interesting portion, with a tedious dissertation upon the graces and beauties of the divine *Mrs.* John (past, present, or future), and conclude by displaying a beautiful porcelain-type of your divinity (porcelain-types *always flatter*), it is highly probable that I should be vexed, and perhaps exclaim, satirically, "Call *that* a beauty! You couldn't judge for me, Mr. John,"—and furthermore add that I feared the tempers or dispositions of ladies of that description were not so good as they might be.

All the very best of us can do is to pray not to be led into temptation. So, John, I decline hearing anything about Mrs. John's superiority, or looking at her picture; unless, indeed, she be not so good-looking as I, in which case it will be easier to be charitable and forgiving.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE AMBITIOUS MAN WITH A CAREER BEFORE HIM, AND THE AMBITIOUS MAN WHOSE CAREER IS CLOSED.

ONE morning Sidney Waltman sat in his office smoking a cigar and trying to concentrate his mind to business. At least he *thought* he was trying, but somehow his mind of late had contracted a habit of wandering persistently from the subject in hand. He smiled several times over a brief he was writing, and presently shoved it aside, and, opening his desk, took out a small miniature. It is no harm, John, if we look over his shoulder and see too. It is a colored ivory-type of Adele. The picture was not flattering, but it was taken in one of her happiest moods. The usual sparkling vitality of her countenance seemed under a faint cloud of sadness, and in her dark, hazel eyes was a tender, almost languishing light, such as the crowd never beheld there.

There was a step on the stair, and Sid hastily disposed of the picture, and raking a pile of dingy documents together, put on a penetrating frown. A chat with Ripley, or any of that clique, on the rival merits of "Longfellow" and "Harry Bassett," or Kellogg and Nilsson, was not to his taste this morning. Besides he had work to do. Ripley, with a bank at his back, might afford to lean against its corners, and expend himself in theatre- and horse-talk, but *he* had no time for such idle amusements.

It was not Ripley, however, nor any of his clique; it was Sid's honored uncle. Now Sid liked his uncle, for two reasons. He knew positively that he was not to fall heir to his uncle's extensive property, it having

been made over, long ago, to certain charitable institutions; and he knew that his uncle had a *real* interest in his welfare. So he arose and handed him a chair, with a show of cordiality and respect that was not all assumed.

"Do not let me interrupt you," he said, taking the chair and propping his feet upon another.

Sid was not interrupted; he was rather glad to have his uncle to talk to just then, to show him the picture which had just been tinted by a skillful artist, and to ask his advice on various subjects. So he handed him the picture and a cigar, and lighting a fresh one for himself, stretched his feet upon the rug and forgot his work.

Mr. Beckworth was one of those gentlemen who grow old handsomely. He was somewhat massive in his build, though his hands and feet were aristocratically small. His complexion was of that peculiar description likened by George Eliot to "old ivory,"—a deep gray eye, critical and cold in its quiet penetration, and a face upon which only vast and devastating storms could work any perceptible change. Not that it contained a hint of harshness or of hardness,—it was singularly free from traces of vulgar or vicious thought; but impulses and emotions had been battled down, and had settled, strata upon strata, until the incrustation comprehended a tablet upon which only the sharp tool of the engraver, Sorrow, could make a riffle of change. It was an intellectual face, and strangely attractive withal.

He looked at the picture awhile in silence; then said it was "good," and laid it aside. "You are the young gentleman," he said, holding his unlighted cigar between his dainty thumb and finger, "who was to employ his youth in laying a broad foundation, upon which, in after-life, was to be erected a grand structure,—a temple of all that is noble and good; in other words, give his whole mind to deep and earnest study, take advan-

tage of every opportunity to acquire knowledge, and to rise to unexampled eminence."

"You have enunciated my creed correctly," returned Sid.

"But I detect a flaw in the *practice*."

Sid glanced at his uncle through his long black lashes, and, smiling slightly, replied, "I understand,—too much party, theatre, and Miss Hughes."

"Yes, and especially Miss Hughes. If you are in earnest in your ambitious schemes, Sid, I advise you, let women alone. They are death to all such lofty projects."

"Really, uncle, I have no serious intentions."

"I did not seriously suppose that you had," interrupted his uncle, impatiently; "but there is such a thing as carrying a flirtation too far; and this, I confess, begins to wear a serious aspect,—upon *your* side, at least."

"Oh, I can take care of myself," returned Sid, with a laugh.

"I do not doubt that; and so, for that matter, can the young lady. But, in the mean time, what is to become of your career? Your business prospects suffer from neglect; your reputation as a practical business man is on the decline. If your object is, simply, enjoyment, marry the woman you love, and while the honeymoon lasts you will have it. Further than that no mortal can answer for."

Mr. Beckworth arose, looked through his eye-glass at the pictures of Mrs. Siddons and Charlotte Cushman, which adorned the walls, and was turning to take his leave, when Sid, suddenly arousing from his deep reverie, exclaimed,—

"Not so fast, Mr. Beckworth; I am not through with you yet, my sage adviser. I know you are an accomplished theorizer. You follow your own advice, and live up to your own theories, too,—which is more than the most of them do. But what has come of it?

You have not married; you are proud and ambitious; and where is *your* career?"

Mr. Beckworth returned, re-seated himself deliberately, and restored his feet to their former comfortable position. "Have you a glass of sherry, or port, or anything, by you, Sid?" he inquired.

The young gentleman fumbled among his papers awhile, and finally produced a lean bottle, from which he drained a meagre glass of pale ale. "That is all I have, uncle," he said, apologetically.

His uncle thanked him, drained the glass without making a face, and after a moment's pause began: "Suppose I should tell you, Sid, that I am not the bachelor the world takes me to be?"

"How?" exclaimed Sid, looking puzzled. "You are not *married?*"

"I *was* married," said his uncle. For a few moments there was silence between them. Sid did not venture to give voice to his astonishment, but waited, respectful and attentive.

"I was about your age,—the young lady some two or three years younger; but she was older in head. You remember the picture over the mantel of the east chamber?—the one which you and Beverley admired so? It is not a fancy picture, as you supposed, but the portrait of my wife."

"That splendid gypsy beauty?" exclaimed Sid.

"She was Spanish," said his uncle. "I married her in San Francisco, after a few weeks' acquaintance. It was a case of love at first sight,—upon both sides, confessedly. We lived together a year. The honeymoon was ecstatic. I confidently believed myself the most fortunate man in the universe. I had the most devout impulses of charity and good-will toward man; renewed my neglected religious exercises, and had serious inclinations toward joining the church."

Mr. Beckworth took out his cigar-case, passed it to Sid, bit off the end of his cigar, and lit it. "All chaff!

At the end of the year, when my wife eloped with a former lover, after secret intrigue and deception which Satan himself could not have eclipsed,—so innocent and pious a face the angel wore!—I could have burned every church, bible, and tract in Christendom with pleasure. If you *must* marry, Sid, marry for money; and then if she elopes, take care that she leaves her goods and chattels behind. Then you will not be left an entirely helpless object of pity and scandal. *My* adored managed to take a goodly portion of this world's goods, for which she married me, along with her,—I trusted the angel so. However, *you* would be spared that misfortune, Sid,—ha! ha! You have nothing, except this beautiful office,—in arrears for rent, I'll be bound,—and its elegant upholstery, worth about five dollars, en masse."

"Where is she now?" inquired Sid, not participating in his uncle's merriment.

"I neither know, nor care," he replied. "Dead perhaps; I hope so, though we are no more to each other than if she had never existed; still, I should not like to see her again."

"Then I should think you would not care to keep her picture."

"Oh, yes! I keep that to remind me of what an utter idiot I have been, and might be again; and to prevent my forgetting what a consummate cheat is female loveliness,—a mere outside show, beneath the fairest of which Magdalen's seven devils have taken up their permanent residence."

"*You* need no such reminder," returned Sid, with a sigh. "You can mingle familiarly with the most beautiful and attractive, and receive no damage. Would that I had your armor, for I fear me you will yet find me in some dingy tenement, stretching every nerve to keep starvation from the door,—all hope of a career laid in its grave."

Mr. Beckworth held his cigar between his fingers,

and contemplated it reflectively. "You are right," he said, turning his quiet gray eye upon Sid. "My heart is dead, at last."

"I suppose it is worth the sacrifice," resumed Sid, with an air of depression. "I have seen enough of promising young men coming to naught from having a family on their hands. And I confess that I have a cowardly dread of poverty. But you, uncle, have no such drawbacks. Your career is done. You have wealth and the mature judgment to make a better selection. Why not marry, and give your house a mistress? It sadly needs one."

"I tell you, woman has no longer any power over me. It might be that I would take a pleasure in the possession of a superb *living* statue, the same as in other adornments of my establishment."

He arose immediately, threw the remainder of his cigar in the grate, and departed.

For a long time Sid remained in the position his uncle left him, lost in thought. "A right shrewd old chap," was his irreverent reflection. "I see that he is right." He took up the little miniature that was still lying on the table, and looked at it long and tenderly. "You are very beautiful, but time corrodes such loveliness. You are enchanting, but such delights soon languish and die. I choose fame,—difficult to procure, but everlasting. When I am in the meridian of my glory, you will be a wrinkled parody on your past magnificence."

And yet he sighed as he locked it into its secret hiding-place, and resumed his interrupted work.

What is the meaning, John, of this strange struggle between good and evil we call life?

Of what are we created,—our souls I mean,—that we are forever at war with ourselves? Are we equal parts of God and devil? How often under the pressure of urgent circumstances we commit wrongs for which

afterward the good within us mourns, and refuses to be at ease, until we have made atonement! How often, when we have determined upon the execution of some difficult duty, some flaunting temptation has caught us in its current and whirled us out of all sight and sound of the self-sacrificing mood! What are we at last but the helpless creatures of circumstance? The zealous Paul would perhaps have gone on to his dying, persecuting Christians, but for that miraculous arresting voice. James and John, and all those good apostles might have spent their little day in mending their nets and cruising along the shore for fish, but for the unexpected and irresistible command, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." And Judas Iscariot——

But hold!—I perceive a flaw. Paul was a devout and godly man, zealous in the way he thought to be right; these fishermen pious, God-fearing men; their day, however spent, would have been a good day: whereas Judas, whether here or there, in whatever age or position, would have shown a base career. He who has it in him to love God cannot but be noble, however humble his lot, and the hater of righteousness has that within him which tends to defilement, however lofty his position.

Dear John, let *us* serve God and keep his commandments. If we are careful to do that we need not bother over the mysteries of this life. Knowledge will come in the hereafter, and that will be soon enough.

CHAPTER IX.

THE UNEXPECTED EXIT.

One afternoon, upon returning from their diurnal stroll, the young ladies found two unexpected visitors awaiting their return. They were Messrs. Waltman and Hughes (our old friend Herve).

Herve had been there some time; had amused himself with pictures, books, and albums, finally settling down upon the poems of Bret Harte, which he found upon the table, marked at the poem, "Her Letters," with a lady's glove. He was dressed very genteelly, and having informed the servant who he was, and that he was from the country,—the latter being a totally unnecessary piece of information, as that honest, trusting, innocent physiognomy was recognizable as a product of the "green retirement" even to Timon,—was ushered into the front parlor to *wait*. Sid had called a short time after, and—being told that the young ladies were out was about to depart when Tim volunteered the information that they would be *in* directly, and that there was "another gen'leman waitin' in de parlor,"—concluded to wait in "de parlor" too.

Not being advised of Mr. Hughes's identity, Sid had concluded him one of Adele's admirers and quizzed and worried him to his heart's content. Herve, though a sensible and well-informed fellow, was no match, in this sort of tilting, for Sid Waltman. He knew how to deal with honest criticism; but this covert ridicule, skillfully sheathed in polished and courtly expressions, he had neither the skill nor the patience to parry. Herve was none of your "slow coaches," and his blood was about at fighting-point when the young ladies arrived.

Mr. Waltman came forward with his usual grace as they entered the room,—expressed himself happy, etc., at the same time acknowledging his "deep indebtedness" to the gentleman present for having enlivened the tedium of waiting by his lively accounts of the crops, etc.

"Good heavens, it is Herve!" exclaimed Adele, as her quick eye passed Sid, and measuring the erect form and flashing eye, took in the whole situation at once. She greeted her favorite brother with characteristic warmth and presented him to Ophelia, who remembered him quite well,—and to Mr. Waltman, who perceiving what an egregious blunder he had made set about rectifying it by making "a clean breast of it."

"The fact is," he said, with modest confusion, "I was sure it was one of Miss Adele's old lovers, consequently my natural enemy; the opportunity was too tempting, and I set about dispatching him at once. But for your timely arrival there is no telling which of us would have been the mangled remains of a 'promising young man.'"

His apology was received courteously; but finding the social atmosphere a little chilly, he made an early exit.

There was disheartening news from home. Mrs. Hughes was sick; the two elder sisters were overburdened with care and work. Tom had been gone for some time, no one knew where, and everything seemed on a general descent to ruin. Adele was wanted at home. Well, she must go; there was no help for it. Spring was beginning to break, and her wardrobe was in a fit condition for entire renovation, with no means at hand wherewith to replenish it; and so, taking all things into consideration, it was about time for her to get back to the "old prison."

Mrs. Berges, though she was anxious for Adele to remain, for reasons of her own, was not one of those munificos whereof we read, who delight in endowing

their protégées with splendid outfits at their own expense. Ophelia remonstrated with Herve, and protested that Adele would not be of much service to them; which he acknowledged might be the case, but stood firm. She must be ready and at the depot by seven in the morning. He would send an omnibus for her, as he had some little business matters to transact that would prevent his seeing her again before that time.

Ophelia told him that, if he was determined that Adele should go, she would take her to the depot at the appointed time in the carriage, and that no omnibus was necessary.

"Write me all the gossip and current items," said Adele, as they drove down to the depot in the early morning, "and by all means everything about myself. Will you, Ophelia?"

Ophelia promised that she would. "All our literary discussions are at an end, I fear," she said, regretfully.

As they drove up in front of the depot, Sid Waltman stepped out. "Going home?" he inquired. "I expected as much. I thought that burly brother had come for no good. He's not in there, is he?" starting back with a look of pretended apprehension of the "burly brother;" but upon being informed that he was nowhere around, assisted them out.

"It is too cruel of you to be deserting us in this fashion, just as you were becoming indispensable to our comfort." He took in, at a glance, how hard it was for her to go, though she said nothing of her reluctance. "Shall you be at home all summer?" he inquired.

"I am not likely to get far away," she replied, shortly.

"How hospitable are you Jonestown folks? to the extent of keeping a jaded denizen of the town for a few days? I have relatives out there and may make you a visit this summer."

"It is but a poor place," she said, humbly. "The dullness is hideous, even to me, accustomed to it; and to people who all their lives have been used to intelligent human society, it would be unbearable, I fear."

"It would not be dull to me, I am sure," returned Sid.

"Nor to me," added Ophelia. "It is the most romantic old place. It would furnish material to a fervid imagination for air-castles innumerable."

"Do you build air-castles there, Miss Del?"

"The most gloomy and ghostly structures!" exclaimed Adele. "They frighten even me."

"You must expend your fancy upon such edifices no more. Let your dreams be fairy visions hereafter, and may *I* inhabit the gayest palace of all."

"It is an idle pastime," said Adele, "and I shall waste as little time at it as possible."

"What an opportunity for study! You might devour tomes upon tomes," said the literary gourmand.

"My good friend, I should be delighted to do so, but books are not a natural product of the Jonestown hills, and I find the growth to be remarkably scarce thereabouts. I literally starve for something to read. A few periodicals but aggravate the appetite. With plenty of books, I could vegetate comfortably without ever seeing a human being. In society you are oftentimes forced to read when you have no desire to know, and withheld when you would search to the bottom; but with books you can make your own selection."

They were in the ladies' waiting-room, and Sid arose and, going to the clerk's stand, inquired how long before the train started. "Fifteen minutes," was the reply. Excusing himself to the young ladies, he left them and went out on the street.

"What a pity Sid is not an upright, honorable man like Mr. North!" remarked Ophelia, looking after him.

"I would sooner trust Mr. Waltman than Mr. North," returned Adele, decidedly. "I think Sid has more

good qualities than he gets credit for,—more than he gives himself credit for."

No more was said on that subject. Each considered the other deceived in the estimate of the two characters. Presently Sid returned with a package under his arm, which he gave to Adele, extracting the promise that she would not open it "until she was quite famished for something to read,—then she would appreciate the selection more."

He had just settled himself comfortably when Herve made his appearance. The new element did not contribute materially to the harmony of the group, and I think it likely that the whole party felt relieved when the train was announced.

A hurried farewell, a promise to write, and the two friends parted,—when and how to meet again? A close pressure of her hand, a deep glance,—inscrutable, yet full of meaning,—and Sid bade farewell to the woman whom he loved. He was glad she was going; he could murder and bury the undesired passion without hinderance or delay. Herve's adieus were made with brevity and coolness.

"Your friend seems to me cold-hearted and formal," he remarked as the train started.

"She is not," was the brief reply.

"That insufferable puppy, Waltman, deserves a good thrashing," he further remarked. Receiving no reply, he wisely concluded to remain silent.

I have no lecture for you to-night, John. I ought, perhaps, to scold you a little, merely to preserve your self-complacency within reasonable bounds; but the night is too beautiful. The gray twilight lingered, but it is gone at last. The restless sentinel at my window reaches forth an arm and taps upon the pane. The listless winds whisper mysteriously amid the leafy branches, and a faint odor of spring flowers impregnates the air. There are no lamps to-night, for the full

moon lights up the street. She looks saucily in at our window, John. She thinks it is high time that you were gone. So good-night.

CHAPTER X.

DRIFTING WITH THE CURRENT.

THE house seemed gloomy and strange when Ophelia returned to it alone. She wandered through the lonely rooms and silent halls, moody and reflective, but not unhappy. The past winter had been rife with gayety, but sadly deficient in good works. This day ushered in a new era. She "set her house in order," and instituted brave rules and plans for the coming season.

There were some six or seven families of worthy, struggling poor whom she had been in the habit of supplying with clothes from the refuse of the family wardrobe. She had neglected this during Adele's stay. Her friend's appetite for pleasure seemed so inexhaustible and contagious, as to leave no leisure for the tiresome exercise of performing one's duty. But, really, there was no self-sacrifice in Ophelia's charitable performances,—only a little dry dullness. She did not love her poor people, except in an abstract way. Their thoughts and ways were totally different from hers. She pitied them, and they were very grateful to her, but there was no sympathy between them.

"Where have you been?" inquired Miss Fischer, as she and Ophelia met at a corner where one of the dingy streets—upon which her "poor and needy" lived—led off from a splendid and popular thoroughfare. "What in the world took you up there?"

Ophelia smiled complacently. She liked to astonish

her butterfly friends with accounts of her good deeds; and although she did not intrude them upon public notice, she was not averse to their being made known. The look of awe and the exclamation, "You are an angel, Ophelia!" were not very distressing or distasteful to her: at least she endured them without complaint.

"I suppose it would be useless," said the pretty little worldling, when the facts had been explained satisfactorily to all parties, "to ask such a saint to go with me to the matinée?"

"No," said Ophelia, yawning furtively, "I am through now, and I know of nothing to prevent my going."

"So your friend has left," said Miss Fischer, as they walked down street together. "Do not you feel just a little relieved?"

"No, indeed," returned Ophelia; "I was sorry to see her go."

"You were really attached to her, then? It was generally supposed that the attachment was almost entirely upon the other side."

"Adele is demonstrative, I am not,—that is all the difference."

"But you are not at all alike," persisted Miss Fischer."

"Our dispositions are different, but our tastes are almost precisely the same. Though our outward appearance and actions were so dissimilar, we thought and felt alike."

"You approved of her character and manner, then?" looking a little disappointed.

"As much as I approve of any one's," returned Ophelia. "The trouble with Adele is that her faults are all on the surface."

"She was rather too fond of admiration to suit my taste," said Miss Fischer, with a challenging toss of her head. "I never saw anything to equal it."

"We are *all* fond of admiration," returned Ophelia, mildly, "only Adele got a little more than falls to the share of many."

"As mamma says, she took like an epidemic, and was dismissed as thankfully as if she had been one,"—with which brilliant piece of satire the conversation closed.

The play was a popular one, but Ophelia took but little interest in it. She had been an intense admirer of the drama, but her taste had changed. The glittering tinsel, the gorgeous scenery, and imposing paraphernalia had lost their charm. The glory had somehow faded away, and left painted men and women in tawdry finery, scenery that had been daubed with a brush like a broom and sold by the yard, and glaring trap-doors, where, of old, the spiritual were wont to vanish into "thin air." She could no longer believe the heroes and heroines to be as good as they represented themselves, and felt indifferent to the triumphs of virtues that were assumed for the evening and cast aside with the costumes they wore.

Ophelia flattered herself that this change of taste was due to some moral or intellectual advancement, but it was simply because she had entered upon a graver and less enthusiastic epoch of her life. She did not reflect how she no longer wept over grand anthems and oratorios, nor rejoiced, loved, and hated with the same extravagant and evanescent fervor.

It so chanced that Hal Ripley and Mr. North were at the theatre that afternoon, though neither of them were habitués. North was too much of a business man for that, and Ripley was fonder of parties and balls.

"I thought you did not care for the theatre?" said Ripley, sitting down by Ophelia.

His injured air and reproachful tone were calculated to impress an observer with the idea that he had some cause for complaint as to her indifference to the theatre. Ophelia laughed, as she usually did when any one found

fault with her,—it really seemed so absurd,—and said that nothing but a desperate state of listlessness had brought her there. Ripley gave her his opera-glass, and while she scanned the crowd, now and then making a remark on what she saw, and now and then smiling upon his humorous chat, his frown and injured air vanished. Miss Fischer, in the mean time, inundated the phlegmatic, or rather, taciturn, North with small chat, bird-like in sound and sense. The matinée over, the gentlemen accompanied the young ladies to their homes.

"Wait for me at the corner, North," said Ripley, as they separated, "and we will go back together."

The two ladies lived upon adjoining squares, and so it was not long before their escorts met "at the corner," though North was there first. "I expected to have to wait longer," he said, as Ripley came up. "You seem very fond of your cousin?"

"She is not really my cousin," said Ripley. "The relationship is only nominal." When they had walked a little distance in silence, he resumed, "Yes, I *am* fond of Ophelia; so fond that I intend she shall be my wife some day,—if she will have me."

"You are in earnest?"

"Certainly!" returned Ripley, a little sharply. "Is it anything strange that I should be in earnest?"

Mr. North was surprised, not to say startled. He had always intended Ophelia for himself; indeed, he had given Ophelia herself to understand that such was his intention, though in so vague and guarded a manner as to leave himself free, should he chance to change his mind. The idea that any one else might cherish the same intentions had never entered his mind. He had felt entirely secure in the encouraging appreciation of Mamma Berges, and also in the evident good-will of the daughter.

He turned a furtive, calculating glance upon his rival. In youth and personal appearance Ripley had the ad-

vantage. They were prosperous alike, but in solidity of position and reputation North felt himself to be immeasurably superior. "I have been the careful architect of my own fortune," he thought; "everything is substantial and sure; whereas Ripley receives *his* by inheritance, and also an extravagant and luxurious taste, and no business knowledge or habits to sustain and assist him through difficulties.

"You know, I presume, that Miss Berges will inherit none of her adopted father's property?" he said at length.

"I assuredly do," returned Ripley, stiffly. "A matter of no consequence whatever to me. I do not propose to sell my chance for happiness for houses and lands, when I have already a sufficiency. I leave that sort of proceeding to such money-machines as you, North."

"I admire your principle," returned the other. "It has always been mine, though you seem to consider me entirely sordid. Ophelia Berges is a fortune in herself, and needs no other dower."

"She is an enigma to me," continued Ripley,—"a sublime mystery. Sometimes I think her an embodied glacier, without the power of feeling; at others a veritable Desdemona for loving. Whatever she may be, she is the bright particular star of my affections, and will some day be Mrs. Ripley."

Mr. North smiled to himself over this extravagant bit of rhapsody as he exclaimed, "What! Ophelia Berges a mystery? I know of no one of whose real character and disposition I feel more assured. Any one can read Ophelia at a glance. She is the most transparent creature I ever saw."

"That is because you are a totally disinterested party," returned Mr. Ripley. "She *seems* an affectionate, amiable sort of a creature, and that is all you care about it."

Mr. North did not say *what* he "cared about it,"

and the two separated presently. "I flatter myself that was a first-class *coup de grace*," was Mr. Ripley's complacent reflection. "He will not dare to risk his chances against a handsome young fellow like me."

But Mr. North was not composed of as malleable material as his rival presumed. He was stubbornly persevering, and opposition made him all the more determined. Really, he had no desire to marry. His habits had become settled; his passions had fallen into the "sere and yellow leaf;" his heart was as dead as an Egyptian mummy. But the thought of leaving his beloved property—for which he had slaved away the happiest portion of his life—to the pack of relatives who were waiting for it with longing eyes,—greedy, unfeeling people, who had cast him off in childhood, and whom he hated now,—was more than he could bear. He *must* marry, and Ophelia was the only woman he knew who suited him in the least.

She was intelligent, amiable, accomplished. Also she was good,—pious. Did he like that? A pious wife would be industrious, kind, and frugal. She would have mercy upon her husband's pocket-book. She would look well to the ways of her household, and correct the manners and morals of her servants and children,—and, alas! also of her husband. He took a whole week to make up his mind; Mr. North never did anything without due consideration; and when next he met Ophelia, it was with the full determination of making her his wife as soon as he could obtain her consent.

It was at a party. She was with Hal Ripley, as usual. He observed her with a new interest. *His* future wife! The thought started his pulse into a livelier beat. She had an unusual, a patrician grace which detached and isolated her from the surrounding crowd,—like some elegant exotic, distinguished above its companions of the conservatory, more because of peculiar and uncommon characteristics than for actual beauty. How her companion watched her and hung

upon her words! It was evident that he adored her,—that he held her in his heart an idol, worshiped with a savage, idolatrous fervor of which she *seemed* wholly unconscious.

Mr. North watched his rival with rising indignation; saw him take hold of her arm upon pretense of adjusting her bracelet; take her bouquet and appropriate one of the handsomest flowers; and many other odious familiarities which he wondered she did not resent. And then he began to fear that he had rested in security a little too long. Nothing arouses a selfish nature so much as seeing its possessions endangered. He could not afford to lose Ophelia, and the fear lest he *should* quickened his desire to possess her. But so long as Ripley was near her he held aloof.

Watching her chances, Ophelia at length escaped from the heat and glare of the crowded rooms out into the balmy moonlight upon a deserted veranda. She was growing indescribably weary of Hal's constant and assiduous attentions. Ophelia's heart in its unawakened state was hard. Hal was a "nice fellow," good-looking and popular, and made a charming escort; and, while she witnessed his growing passion with regret, an indolent dislike to hard feelings and uncomfortable experiences prevented her giving any decided exhibition of her disapproval. And now that he began to love her *too* hard, she thought it very unkind in him to torment her with his jealousy and despair. It was not *her* fault, she thought. She had not wanted him to love her,—only to be her friend; and she could not understand why he could not go away and love some other woman who would accept the boon with more gratitude. And there were scores who had given strong evidences of their willingness to accept the devotion of the accomplished banker's son.

As Ophelia tranquilly contemplated the moon, and thought vaguely of these things, she heard a light step behind her. It was Hal, she supposed, a little impa-

tiently, come to hunt her; but, upon turning, was surprised and not displeased to find Mr. North at her side. There was a flippant speech upon her tongue, such as society-women soon learn to fit upon awkward turns and pauses in their little play, but there was something in the look she met as she lifted her eyes to his that suddenly arrested it.

"My pet! Oh, you are mine, you know, Ophelia,—long ago; and I have deferred the establishment of my claims long enough. I think I shall proceed to take immediate possession of my rightful property before it is appropriated by some other enterprising individual." He had taken her hand, had slipped an arm about her waist, and was bending to look into the startled eyes, when suddenly, without a word, Ophelia broke away and was gone.

Mr. North looked after her, foolishly. He never *had* felt quite so silly. He was a little angry and a little amused. "I was too hasty, I suppose," he reflected. "I forgot that she was not prepared,—had no idea of the rapid strides my affections had made in the past few hours. Another such clumsy movement and the 'game is up.'"

He felt a decided reluctance to meeting her again that evening, but he determined that it must be done, to show her that he was not disturbed or affrighted off. He found her engaged in lively conversation with two or three gentlemen, but, as he approached, she turned and addressed him, without the slightest hesitation or embarrassment. He saw that she intended to ignore that little episode,—to act as if it had never occurred. Further than that he had not the power to read. He had come upon that inscrutable portion of her character which Hal had remarked, he supposed; but it did not attract *him;* he always suspected the hidden and mysterious, yet he honored *reserve*,—and he found a deeper reserve in her character than he had thought.

It could not be that she was entirely indifferent to

him. He had seen her, too often, blush and tremble and droop her eyes beneath his too earnest scrutiny. Oh, no, she assuredly was not indifferent to him!

(In deciding a case of true love, my dear John, such evidences as these go for naught, though so many of your sex make such capital of them. She possibly shrank from a too familiar scrutiny; she read admiration in your eye, and was abashed,—or she was nervous, and had no control over her blushes.)

Mr. North conversed with Ophelia quite as coolly as she with him. He would meddle no more with sentiment—it was not in his line—until he had settled the matter in a sensible, business-like way. In the first place, he would make an ally of the old gentleman,—her father; of the elegant mamma's approbation he was already assured.

Upon the following morning he made his appearance in the office of the Berges "establishment," and asked to see the head of the firm, in private. The head of the firm presented himself, said, "Good-morning, Mr. North," and led the way into the inner office in a dry, business way which would have frozen the very marrow in the bones of any other person coming upon such an errand except a "cut-and-dried" business man like North. It suited *him* precisely.

He made a concise and explicit statement of his possessions and his expectations; also indicated his knowledge of Ophelia's condition in regard to finances, and then made a formal proposition for the dowerless hand of his accomplished daughter.

Mr. Berges eyed the merchant for awhile in silence. Evidently he was surprised. "I have no cause for objection, sir," he replied, slowly and reflectively. "I believe you to be a strictly honest, upright man, or I should not hesitate to decline your flattering offer."

"I may rely then upon your favor and assistance in my suit?" inquired Mr. North, doubtfully.

"What! You have not spoken to her?"

"Not explicitly."

"Ah, this is indeed honorable!" exclaimed the old gentleman, brightening. "If this time-honored custom of consulting the parents first (who must know the sort of man who would make a good husband better than the daughter could possibly know) were more in use, we would have less of divorce cases and desertions. This is as it should be."

"It is the only honorable course," said Mr. North. "You will speak to your daughter, if you please, Mr. Berges, and inform her of your wishes upon the subject."

"I will speak to her and inform her of my entire approval of your suit. You have my hearty good wishes for your success and happiness." The old gentleman took up his hat and gold-headed cane, shook hands cordially with his prospective son-in-law (who received his demonstrations of high regard with the modest dignity of deserving merit), and intimated that he was expected elsewhere. At which quiet hint the prospective son-in-law took up *his* hat and gold-headed cane, and gracefully made his exit.

At the supper-table, the servant having been dismissed,—stopping, however, at the keyhole,—heard the following conversation:

"I have some surprising news for you, Ophelia," said Mr. Berges,—"nothing more nor less than a proposal for your hand."

"From whom, papa?" inquired Ophelia, blushing and looking slightly confused, but not so surprised as might have been expected.

"From one of the most important and substantial business men of our city,—Mr. Oliver North,"—returned papa, with evident pride.

"The very match I have always intended for you, Ophelia," said Mrs. Berges. "How you will be envied!"

Ophelia looked a little flattered and a little alarmed, but doubtful. "I have no wish to be envied, mamma."

"No, I presume not," returned mamma; "but you are remarkably fortunate, considering that you have no *very* forcible attraction—wealth, beauty, or extraordinary genius—to recommend you to popular favor. I take a practical and business view of the matter, you understand. *We* would not have you otherwise than you are, but the world, you know, sees with impartial eyes and weighs narrowly. You have drawn a capital prize. Mr. North is a gentleman of large property, of high standing, and of irreproachable character."

"It has been the source of great trouble and anxiety to me, Ophelia," said her father, "to know that I could not provide for you as if you were my own child, in a manner suited to your breeding and position, and it would be a great relief to see you placed beyond the contingencies of adversity. Nevertheless I would not urge upon you an alliance that is not entirely congenial to your feelings. Understand that, Ophelia. It is your interests—your happiness—and not our own, which we wish to secure."

"I know, papa," said Ophelia. "I see all the advantages, and I have no objection to Mr. North, only I have no desire to marry now. Oh, dear, I wish people didn't have to marry at all! I would much rather be a teacher, or something, if you would only let me fit myself for one, mamma."

"A teacher, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Berges, indignantly, "after all we've done for you! Such a life would soon wear *all* the beauty out of your face, and the freshness out of your heart and mind. Of all the occupations in this life, that of the teacher is the most wearing upon body and mind, and at the same time the most inadequately compensated. Only the phlegmatic, the dull, and unsympathetic are fitted for teachers."

Ophelia cast a mental retrospect, and took note that the best beloved of her teachers were anything but unsympathetic and dull, but she said nothing.

"I tell you, child," she continued, "while you are

young and fresh, and in a position to be popular, you had better accept whatever favor fortune may bring you, and make the most of your superior advantages, which may not last always."

There was sense in this,—homely, practical sense. If she was ever to marry, now, she supposed, was the time. Everybody married. Few escaped the inevitable fate, and these paid the penalties of outlaws and criminals, and were made everlastingly uncomfortable by the impertinences of society. This was putting it rather strongly, but Ophelia would leave no means unused in forcing her will into alliance with her duty. She did not *want* to marry Mr. North,—nor any one; but she felt that it was the strong desire of her parents that she should; and the very fact that it was a hard trial to her, and altogether against her inclinations, was an argument in its favor to a self-abnegating nature such as Ophelia's. An easy, agreeable path seemed to her all the more dangerous from the power with which it called upon the love of luxury and ease that was inherent in her nature. She had been brought up in a mental atmosphere of theological creeds and tenets. If her mind wearied of dry study, it might air itself upon the straight, open highway of catechisms, religious biography, or sacred history. Upon no account was her childish mind allowed to sport amid the baleful beauties of that debatable land,—poesy and romance. Duty had been painted upon her mind in such dry, hard, disagreeable colors, that she could not have recognized her in a beautiful and attractive garb.

And yet, so depraved is the human mind that Ophelia had cherished one very bright picture,—of a simple cottage-home, far away from the clack of the dissipated city, where she herself was the chief attraction and adornment. It had always been her desire to marry a country gentleman, one who had no moneys to love,—no clubs, no absorbing business pursuits, to divert his affections from her.

"Well," said Mr. Berges, as he arose from the table and unfolded the evening paper preparatory to adjournment to the sitting-room, "study it all over, and have your mind made up by half-past eight this evening, for at that hour he is coming for his answer."

"This evening!" exclaimed Ophelia, in alarm.

"Yes, Ophelia," said mamma. "You have known Mr. North a long time, and it is not possible that you could ever discover more of his disposition and character by waiting longer; and life is altogether too short to be wasted in deliberation."

She rang the bell for the servant-girl, and Ophelia left the dining-room with a troubled countenance. When she had got into the hall, some one touched her elbow. It was Walter. His face, which was a picture of painful anxiety, was slightly smeared with molasses, and his pockets were distorted with apples.

"Sister," he whispered, "you're not going to marry that darned old cock-eyed North?"

"Walter! Where *did* you learn such language?"

"*I'd* rather have cousin Hal a thousand times over," continued Walter; "and he's got plenty of money too. He'd give you everything you wanted, and I don't believe old North would."

"Positively, Walter, I won't listen to such language."

"Well, he's mean, and I don't like him," pouted Walter.

"You don't know anything about him," returned his sister. "Some people do not sound their good deeds abroad. Mr. North is charitable, I *know*. You like Hal the best because he gives you tops and balls."

Walter was silenced, and Ophelia proceeded up the stairs to her own room, where she might settle the matter undisturbed. But the more she thought, the less clearly she saw her way; and so, wearied with contentions and utterly desperate, she took up a book, and deferred a positive decision until the very last moment.

Books sometimes act upon the harassed mind as an opiate, and surround and transfuse it with an atmosphere of soothing tranquillity, such as lulled the lotos-eaters to drift and drift, until they stranded upon that island of stagnant calm. Ophelia soon lost all her doubts and fears amid the fascinating pages of Schiller's "Don Carlos," and when, at the appointed hour, she received her summons to the parlor, she felt careless, almost indifferent, as to her future fate.

Mr. North did not have to wait long. Soon light footsteps were heard coming down the stairs and along the hall. A slight timidity mingled with her usual dignified carriage as she entered the room, and, with a careless inclination of her head, sat down at some distance from him. He moved his chair nearer hers, but did not take her hand. His manner, as he stated his desire, and his arguments in favor of that desire,—for a union with her,—indicated that he felt himself to be engaged upon the most important business of his life. He made no ado about his affection or his respect for her, but his manner spoke more effectually for him. "And now," he concluded, "make haste with your answer. Suspense is hard to endure!" A deep flush —the very first vestige of color she had ever seen upon his face—darkened his countenance.

Ophelia smiled faintly. "You think I can make you happier? You are sure that I will make the sort of wife you want?"

"I had fully made up my mind upon that point before I spoke to your papa," he replied. "You, and no other, are the woman I want for my wife."

"It must be true," said Ophelia. "You know that I have no property,—*nothing* but myself."

"I want only yourself, Ophelia. The property I have is sufficient for both. If I can have *you*, I shall want nothing more. Are you satisfied?"

"Oh, yes." And yet she hesitated.

"Well, do tell me my fate, Ophelia. What is it?"

She had to be urged, he saw, or she would sit there all the evening, hovering over a final decision.

She drew a deep breath. "I am yours, Mr. North, if you really want me." She spoke soberly, almost sadly; but when she saw the sudden light of pleasure, or triumph, whichever it was, that flashed into his face, she blushed and hung her head.

"You have nothing to be ashamed of, Ophelia," he said, smiling brightly, "and much to be proud of. Come and sit by me, and tell me when I may claim my charming little wife. Soon? Very soon?"

He threw himself upon the divan and looked intensely relieved. But she would not sit by him, nor allow him to take her hand, or touch her. Altogether she was very unsatisfactory this evening. However, Mr. North was not at all displeased with her conduct. He teased her and amused himself, and was particularly delighted when he could obtain an indignant glance from the shy eyes. Unconsciously, he overstayed his usual hour,—missed hearing the bells,—and altogether spent an unusually agreeable evening.

"How did you and North make it last night?" queried Papa Berges at the breakfast-table next morning.

A pretty rose-tint and a bright smile overspread Ophelia's countenance, but immediately died away.

"Oh, very well," she replied, demurely; "he seemed very well entertained, and is to take me out riding this afternoon."

"That is right," said the old gentleman, with a chuckle. "Trot him through while you've got the reins, and don't be too easily pleased. He couldn't possibly exert himself too much, in the prospect of obtaining such a charming little wife."

Mrs. Berges extended her congratulations, and Walter frowned and made a face by way of expressing his entire disapprobation. "You've treated cousin Hal doggish mean," he muttered; but, upon being questioned by

his mamma as to the purport of his remark, said that "the steak was rather tough this morning."

I am displeased with Ophelia, John. I tried to believe that she was too supernaturally wise and too transcendentally good to allow herself to be persuaded into marrying where she felt no love. But Ophelia, I perceive, is made of the same ordinary material of which the most of us are composed. She saw comfort in riches, and misery in poverty, and had none of that surprising clairvoyance which causes *some* gifted heroines to start back in horror at the dreadful pictures of the future which spring to their view at the mere mention of an uncongenial marriage. Besides, she had been taught that her first duty was to please her parents; and really she felt more pleasure in *their* pleasure than in her own.

You would be surprised, John, to know how long I was in forming the acquaintance of these people whom you read so readily; how I watched their actions and studied every movement of their minds; and then how I sometimes judged them wrongfully, and would have to go back and remodel my conclusions.

And sometimes, John, I feel that I have *almost* arrived at that point where a very wise, elegant, and accomplished philosopher is led to exclaim: "It is some time since the present writer gave up the idea of what could be called *understanding* any human being whatever, even himself. Every man, within that inconsiderable figure of his, contains a whole spirit,—kingdom and reflex of the All." How, then, is it possible that we could understand? Yet I must live a little longer, and learn a little more, before I can comprehend the full extent of my own imbecility and ignorance.

CHAPTER XI.

GOING BACK.

OPHELIA was *engaged* at last. No one seemed surprised, though she was surprised herself. It did not strike her how lucky she had been in securing such a prize until her friends began to look envious. *Then* she began to think she should have been very foolish indeed to have rejected such wonderful good fortune. Yet she was no happier than before; nay, not as happy. Her freedom was gone, and she had gained nothing in recompense.

Her affianced was very kind to her. He petted and spoiled her; gave her jewels and costly trinkets, but not one inch of his heart. Had he a heart? If he *had, she* knew naught of it. Was this love? she wondered, with a sinking heart. If so, then truly there *was* nothing new under the sun; yet he had strange power over her: a magnetic, arbitrary power, which bent her will to his, though it did not diminish that indefinable feeling of distance, which must always exist in a close alliance of unsuited natures.

He was a very grave man,—enthusiastic upon but one subject, and that a subject totally uninteresting to Ophelia,—money-making. Her vagrant impulses of mirth, her humorous sallies and flashes of merriment, received sudden check from the cold, reproving silence with which he received them; and soon she too became as staid and dignified as he could wish. All her gentle gayety disappeared; she lost her interest in society, though she dutifully accompanied him to opera, party, and ball whenever he required it of her. She seemed to have retired within herself, there to wrestle

with her perplexed and mutinous thoughts. But, from her quiet countenance, no one could tell of the seditious movements going on within.

In this alliance she felt no accession of strength. He was a strong man, and for all their uncongeniality might have made her happy, but he mistook the purpose of strength, and misused it in triumph and empire,—in bringing whatever he would under his own control and binding it to his own will. There were no bonds of sympathy or affection in this union; only the pride of possession upon one side and the consciousness of filial obedience upon the other.

There were not many sensitive chords in Mr. North's nature, therefore he felt none of Ophelia's misgivings in regard to their future. All the strength and vigor of his mind were absorbed in business pursuits; in her society he sought only for rest and amusement. He liked the sound of her low, musical voice, though he paid little heed to what it said; he liked to hear her intricate reveries and nocturnes, though he could not distinguish one from another; and more than all he liked the flush and tremor, and pretty droop of the long dark lashes, which accompanied his lightest caress or tender word. Her reserve did not seriously disturb him. "Some day, when I have the legal right, I can dispel some of this frigid reserve," he thought, "and then I shall have a wife as affectionate and loving as she is obedient and kind."

He meant to make a pet of her. He desired that she should be deeply attached to him, for his own comfort and pleasure. But of that profound and illimitable passion, for which she unconsciously sighed, he was entirely incapable. As well expect nourishing fruits from the sterile llanos, as a noble passion from a sordid heart. That life which is spent in unremitting toil for gold,—that has had no higher ambition, no nobler pleasure than money-getting,—has filled a small, small circuit. The contemplation of ignoble things belittles the soul.

For a better comprehension of this character, let us go back a few years (though, as a general thing, I dislike to retrograde). But the primary elements and moulding influences of childhood oftentimes contain the germ of one's predestined course, therefore should not be overlooked.

Oliver North was about eleven years of age when he, in company with his grandmother, came to the city of L—— and took up his abode in a back room of a third-class boarding-house. From what portion of the globe they "hailed" no one knew or cared. Oliver was a "good boy,"—that is, he molested no one; and the ancient dame was a "hard case,"—judging from the hard face and restless, glittering eye. Though apparently very aged, there was no sign of decrepitude about her; her movements were quick and her voice clear and shrill.

The day following her arrival, she took her grandson and canvassed the city for a suitable business "engagement" for the lad. He was a shrewd, capable-looking boy, and she finally procured him a lucrative and promising position as "cash boy" in one of the principal dry goods establishments, with promise of promotion, provided he should prove satisfactory. He never changed his position, save to move up higher.

They seemed very fond of each other, these two old young people,—childish alike in talk, old alike in ways. Oliver never played with other boys on the street, and always took every cent of his wages home to his grandmother, who locked it up in a strong-box. They counted it over every night, and talked about what it would buy, though they never bought anything; for they lived on *nothing*, figuratively speaking, and Oliver's clothes were furnished him by his employers, who had heard that the frugal boy supported his aged grandparent on his wages.

Oliver was not unlike other boys in his tastes, and often longed for tops and balls; but when he begged

them of his grandmother, that shrewd old lady invented an imaginary history of the toy, from its attractive new state in the shop, down, down,—growing older and more defaced,—until its dark and dismal end; and the boy's wish ended with the imaginary fate of the plaything.

And then the castles the old woman would build, of nights!—the splendid golden dreams that were to be realized by hoarding, hoarding every cent. If the boy pined for a holiday, the pictures of the golden future urged him to his toil. He must not waste a single hour. He must be industrious, obliging, attentive, that he might ingratiate himself with his employers, who Mrs. North had taken care should be sensible, generous men,—and thereby rise. And rise he did, according to his deserts, rapidly.

"If I had been a man," the old lady would say, "I should now be living in a palace, courted and envied, instead of neglected and scorned; but being a woman, I had few chances for making money, and none to save. I was not allowed here, I was not wanted there; and where I *was* allowed or wanted, was but half-paid for my services. And then what I *did* earn the men who had power over me—my father, then my husband, and even my own sons—had the power to spend at their pleasure. But you, Oliver, are your own master, and can save without fear of having it taken from you. Money is the master-power of the world. Get money, and you will have the world prostrate at your feet."

With this vision constantly before his eyes, Oliver, with a practical and energetic mind, and acquisitiveness naturally large, bent every faculty to that one purpose,—getting money. His evenings were spent in study under the tuition of his grandmother, who, though no liberal scholar, was thorough in all the common branches, including book-keeping.

He was just nineteen, and still the confidant and cherished friend of his aged relative, when one summer

night the old lady arrayed herself in funereal garb, folded her hands resignedly, and without complaint or demur set out upon her last long journey. Having set her mind at rest by precautionary measures for preventing extra funeral expenses, let us hope that she found no disturbing causes when she arrived upon "the other shore." Her body was deposited in a cheap burial-ground, of which the next irreverent generation, mayhap, will construct a park, and grow trees out of the sacred dust. Her soul, for aught I know, may have entered upon an illimitable field of gold, there to find an unending occupation in gathering the shining metal into a boundless "strong-box," according to her pleasure upon this earth. No one thought it worth while to examine into Mrs. North's affairs except her grandson, who found himself the legal possessor of some six or eight thousand dollars, the existence of which she had concealed, even from him. Was the youthful heir surprised and elated over his good fortune? Not he. He had expected it, and had long ago disposed of the money in his own mind. He was now book-keeper in the establishment where he had begun as "cash boy"; and he took the money along with his own hoarded earnings, and placed it in the hands of the firm,—indicating his desire to become a silent partner. The firm welcomed him and his money, and at twenty-one the partnership was publicly acknowledged. At the present time he is, perhaps, twice that age, owner of the whole "concern," also of a handsome residence in the most fashionable portion of the city, and accounted one of the nabobs of L——.

Is the nabob any happier than was the cash boy?

"There is that maketh himself rich, yet *hath nothing;* there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches."

Once his heart had asserted its humanity, and had struggled to throw off the yoke of servitude and live for nobler purposes. A happy home, a loving and beloved wife, and a useful and unselfish life were pre-

sented for his acceptance. But that was at an early stage of his career. The lady of his love was poor; his foot was but upon the first rounds of the ladder he had resolved to climb; how could he go up with a family dragging at his heels? So he shunned the woman who had inspired a wish for nobler aims, turned his attention more unweariedly than ever to business pursuits, and speedily recovered from the inopportune attack. Domestic felicity was not necessary to his happiness. Money stood him in stead of a household. But his position demanded that he should marry. His house needed a mistress, and sharp rivalry had excited a sort of feeling in his heart: *he* supposed it to be love. At least he found himself more anxious on the subject than he had been on any subject not connected with business for a long time.

Hal Ripley, returning from a little pleasure expedition to a neighboring city, was greeted with the news of Ophelia's engagement. He was incredulous. But repeated assurances at length had their effect. Ophelia was in the sitting-room frowning over her embroidery, when his quick, impatient step fell upon her ear. He slammed the gate and came up the walk and into the hall; at the door he paused.

"Come in, Hal," said Ophelia. Her face brightened and the frown vanished, though Hal at that moment was not an object to dispel gloomy thoughts. The dark cloud upon his handsome face obstinately refused to vanish beneath Ophelia's smiles. She was not slow in guessing the cause, but trusted to her influence to reconcile him to the new state of things.

"Is all this true, Ophelia," he said, "that I hear about you and North?"

"What have you heard, Hal?"

"Are you unaware of the chief topic of the day—that you and North are engaged?"

"Oh, that," exclaimed Ophelia, readily. "Yes, Hal,

it is true; but it is very absurd of them to be making a 'to do' over it. Engagements are very common and ordinary affairs."

"Is this your engagement-ring?" he inquired, taking her hand and pretending to examine the cluster of diamonds that glittered upon it.

"Yes," returned Ophelia. "Is it not pretty?"

Before she was aware of what he was about, he had snatched the ring from her finger and thrown it into the street. "There!" he exclaimed, with intense passion. "You shall never marry that scoundrel! I'll murder him first!"

The ring struck upon the iron railing, bounded upon the pavement and rolled into the gutter.

"Hal Ripley! I think you are beside yourself!" exclaimed Ophelia, indignantly.

She called the servant-girl and both went out to search for it. Carrie finally mopped it out of the gutter, and Ophelia went back into the house highly incensed. But she gave no sign of it except by a heightened color and more formal bearing.

"Ophelia," said Hal, made penitent by her forbearance, "you ought to be able to forgive me *anything*. You know what misery this is to me. Why did you let me go on loving you, harder and harder, when you knew how it would end? Was that kind?"

"I did not know any more than you, Hal, and I am not to blame. I thought you were only amusing yourself, as plenty of others do."

"Amusing myself!" he exclaimed. "Ophelia, I sometimes think you an angel, but there are times when I have glimpses of a nature as far from perfection as any of us. You either deceive yourself, or you try to deceive me. You knew that I loved you, and took no pains to prevent it."

Ophelia made no further defense; and Hal, looking into the gentle countenance, and perceiving there were tears underneath the drooping lashes, was again stricken

with remorse. "There! do not trouble yourself, Ophelia! I should not have said that."

"But I deserve it, Hal. I know that I am wicked and heedless, and anything but the angel I am taken to be."

Sometimes Ophelia was startled with a sudden perception of her own exceeding sinfulness, which, a few times in her life, had struck upon her consciousness with shocking distinctness,—tearing away the veil that had concealed from her own view, as well as others, her *real self*.

"If *you* are not good and pure," said Hal, "no one is. It was harsh and unjust in me to say that. You are as near an angel as *I* ever care to see: too good, a million times, for that villain North. He would sell his *soul* for money, if he could. Only a week ago he kindly reminded me that you were penniless. I would rather see you dead than married to that unprincipled scoundrel!"

Ophelia rose with heightened color. "I cannot stay here and listen to such talk, so you will have to excuse me, Hal."

She swept haughtily out of the room. But, out of sight, she wept bitter tears,—as much for herself as for Hal.

That evening Mr. North urged her to specify a definite time for their marriage to take place.

"There is no necessity for haste," replied Ophelia. "I am in no hurry to assume the fetters, and courtship, they say, is the happiest period of one's life. Then why not prolong it?"

But Mr. North might have truthfully said that it was not particularly jubilant to him, nor did she appear to be excessively happy; but he preferred a more promising course than arguing with an "unreasonable little dunce," as he mentally styled his affianced, and again had recourse to his influence with her parents.

But these unreasonable people, though they were will-

ing enough to have her safely engaged to a fortune, were in no hurry to part with their daughter.

I am tired of these people now, John, and am going to amuse myself awhile, talking to you. How glad I am that I called *you* into my sanctum, instead of relating my story to a variable and clamorous public!

> "Speak not to me of yonder motley masses,
> Whom but to see puts out the fire of song!
> Hide from my view the surging crowd that passes,
> And, in its whirlpool, forces us along!"

How pleasant it is to have you there by the open window, through which sometimes floats the fragrance of the blossoms, or ripening fruit of a wide-spread orchard, and sometimes the clack and clamor of a busy city!—for, whether in town or country, it is always balmy weather. Your frown and your frank fault-finding are better to me than the plaudits of a multitude. But ah, your smile! if, perchance, some principle advanced, some thought portrayed, or some portrait sketched, meets your approbation. That smile, so full of generous sympathy,—no half-way, lukewarm, cold-blooded *stingy* sympathy, half made up of indifference, which must needs calculate and be sure that one's merits *quite* reach up to the standard mark,—says that you find somewhat to commend in my story, for all its faults. And so I am content to be just as the good Lord made me, and do not pine and sigh for more brilliant qualities, wherewith to startle a world.

Of course there are people who will carp and cavil at all I have to say, but I am not talking to those people, John; only you, who have some tender chords in your heart that I want to reach,—chords that cannot be touched too often nor kept thrilling too long, in this rusty, soul-benumbing life of ours.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BEGINNING WHICH HAS NO ENDING.

THE summer exodus had begun. The theatre had closed. The city looked deserted and dull, for its pleasure-seekers had scattered abroad to the springs or rural districts, and there were none left but plain, plodding, matter-of-fact citizens.

"It is time that *we* were flitting," said Mrs. Berges.

"Yes," returned her husband, "Ophelia looks delicate. We must take her some place. Where do you want to go, Ophelia,—east?"

"No," said Ophelia; "if you and mamma would like it as well, I should prefer one of our own springs, —Crab Orchard, for instance."

"And North would like that," said Mr. Berges; "I observe he cares little about traveling."

"I prefer that Mr. North should stay at home," pouted Ophelia; "I should like a little breath of freedom before I am tied down for life."

"Well, well,—just as you like," returned the old gentleman. "North can stay at home,—if he *will; I* can do without him, I am sure."

In a couple of weeks from that time the Bergeses were registered at Crab Orchard and comfortably installed in commodious apartments. Ophelia thought the place a little dull this season. There were plenty of people,—nice, cultivated people, and silly, fashionable people, and people of various descriptions; but Ophelia found it impossible to become interested in any of them. She had brought a small library along, and so she spent the most of her time in the parlor, or upon the veranda, reading.

One morning she sat upon a divan by an open window,—where a light breeze came in and fanned her blonde hair about,—with a balmy look of delight upon her countenance which showed her utterly absorbed in her book and oblivious of all outward things. Then why did she suddenly look up as some one entered the room?—one of a hundred who had come and gone that morning, unnoticed by her.

She did not know,—nor do I; but it is certain that she did look up,—not carelessly, but with an intensity of interest that was only equaled — nay, *surpassed*— by that of the keen dark eyes which met her own. The room was not shaded; the morning light was clear, and the tall, erect figure, which stood for a moment in the doorway, was vividly outlined. Not many would have been deeply impressed with this person, who, according to popular taste, was neither handsome nor graceful; but Ophelia was impressed as she had never been, in all her life, before.

"How he could love!" was her first thought; "and endure, and suffer, and be strong!" were after-thoughts.

He seemed well known to the other occupants of the room, and answered the bows, right and left, with a satirical profundity that was assumed, perhaps, to hide some deeper feeling. He seemed to *endure* rather than enjoy the attention of which he was at that moment the recipient. Carelessly disposing himself in the first vacant chair, he immediately commenced a conversation with the lady in whose neighborhood he found himself. The young lady, whose countenance might previously have adorned an effigy of Despair, as she sat, listless and unnoticed against the wall, began to brighten.

Ophelia returned her attention to her book, with vague feelings of mistrust, or fear, or—she knew not what!—and resolutely kept it there. She was not sorry when papa came in, mopping his face with a handkerchief, and congratulating himself that he had at last found a place that was not like a bakeoven.

"I have just met with the son of an old, old friend, —Kingsley. You have heard me speak of Kingsley? —a high-toned Southern gentleman, imperious and self-willed, but a more generous and warm-hearted gentleman never lived; and, if I mistake not, his son is a 'chip of the old block.' Poor Kingsley! his stub-born will was the ruin of him. He became involved in a lawsuit, and died suddenly from apoplexy, caused by violent grief and resentment, when the suit went against him. His son has been reared in luxury and indolence, and is but little fitted for the battle with adverse fate which lies before him."

"Is he poor? Then what is he doing here?" inquired Ophelia, idly.

"He is a reporter. Why, bless me, there he is now! Looking straight over here, too! Shall I bring him over?"

He was gone, on the instant; and in one minute more Ophelia was acknowledging an introduction to the tall stranger. It was a true instinct that gave her a strong desire to leave the spot, and get away, beyond the reach of his influence. But *then* she did not understand its purport,—and so she fought against it, and remained. And thus, carelessly and unexpectedly, drifted into her life one who was to change its whole current.

For once Ophelia lacked repose of manner. Her color rose and swept across her face, then receded and left it pale. Again and again it rose and fell, and a strange, disturbed sensation crept over her. She looked at him with wonder, for she was conscious that these feelings proceeded from some intensely sympathetic or magnetic power in him, and not from any thoughts of her own. It was a totally unexpected and unwelcome influx of feeling, and both frightened and angered her. Yet it was not so strange as Ophelia thought. Her unsatisfactory engagement had awakened into consciousness the deep desire for a profound and infinite passion, possible only to heroic souls, and inherent within all

noble natures. That, in the first deep glance of this stranger, she had a glimpse of what she so earnestly desired,—the entire hopelessness of ever appropriating the coveted prize,—together with the mysterious magnetism which forced her will into subjection, and made her, against her wish, the recipient of his admiration, —all combined to agitate and thoroughly overwhelm a naturally calm and self-poised nature.

Ophelia took but little part in the conversation, until Mrs. Berges entered the room, and, with a keen, disapproving glance at Kingsley, called her husband away; when she was forced to look at him, and talk to him, and to be deeply interested.

"When I was over there," he said, "picturing to myself the sort of young lady I fancied you to be, I did not dream that I should so soon have an opportunity for finding out. Your father tells me that you are likely to remain here some time."

"What sort of a person did you fancy I might be?" inquired Ophelia.

"Oh, a sort of 'Marianne in the moated Grange,'— wearied unto death of the spirit-solitude which she was forced to endure."

He did not seem to consider that he had said anything unusual, until she colored, and looked a little vexed, —when he seemed greatly amused, and continued,—

"You are not a contented young lady, for all you look so serene. The calm exists only on the surface. I should say you were *heart-hungry*."

"You mean that I am in love with no one, I presume," she said, half displeased.

"It cannot be possible that you love any one," he gallantly returned, "for in that case you would, most assuredly, be deeply beloved in return. And your face tells me that you have no such heart-absorbent."

He looked at her and talked to her as if she were something new and strange,—a study interesting and abstruse:

"A language dead, a scription
On tablets in the sea."

Their minds had been trained in diverse schools,—he amid books and solitude,—she among people, *crowds* of people. And yet there must have been a similarity of thought and feeling, for already a strong confidence had sprung up between them. I have said that he was not handsome, but his features were refined, though not regular, and had a singularly pure, spiritual expression. A face that was pale and a little worn, a smooth and somewhat prominent forehead, clouded with a mass of fine, dark-brown hair; a good mouth, though not too small, and eyes—but what use to describe eyes that are changeable? When he first entered the room they were a vivid black,—a light sprang into them, and they were brown and lambent,—and now that she had a nearer view of them, she perceived that they were gray, dark and deep, with an amber light irradiating about the pupil, brightening and darkening according to each varying emotion.

Ophelia turned the conversation upon religious topics. Why she could not tell, but she felt an immediate and overpowering desire that he should be *good*, that his precious soul should be saved. She awoke from her lethargy, and spoke with unwonted fervor of the Father's compassion, the children's disobedience, and of the beauty of self-sacrifice and religious devotion.

"Religion," he returned, in a sarcastic tone, "has become a matter of vast piles of brick and stone, of fine discourses and comfortable pews. I can imbibe good only from good people. Whatever of good there is in me—if there should chance to be any—I owe to the influence of a Christian mother. The evil is a natural product of a redundant and uncultivated soil. I look forward to the assistance of a pious wife for the eradication of that."

Again that slight pink flush mounted to her cheek, and again he smiled and looked amused. "A commodious field, you were thinking?"

"No," she returned; "you do not look so very wicked."

He expressed his happiness in her good opinion, and his regret that he did not truly deserve it.

"You overlook the Bible," she said, at length; "does its influence go for nothing in your estimation?"

"I never read it," he replied.

Ophelia looked startled at this cool confession. Not read the Bible! Why, the man was upon the very high-road to destruction, with no saving power within his reach! She must be good to him,—she must strive to establish an influence over him, so that she might lead him into the right way. And so the matter was settled. She gave up the idea of shunning him. He always found her ready for a conversation, for reading, a walk, or anything that he wished; and, in return, he submitted to her lectures, and made profuse promises toward growing pious and good.

Crab Orchard revived. Really, it was the most interesting place Ophelia had ever visited. Such pleasant parlors, such shady walks, and *such* interesting people. She gave up her books, only when Kingsley read to her, and it was very singular that he should select just such books as she liked best; impassioned books, such as speak to the higher understanding, arouse the genial emotions, awaken affinities and lull repulsions; books which bring to light one's better nature and inspire that feeling of common brotherhood with the whole human race. She had been taught that time spent upon such books was totally lost, and felt relieved to find her taste shared by so brilliant a mind.

What a friend Ophelia had found! Her whole nature seemed to be awakening from a repose as deep and lethargic as that of the Lady Gwynneth in her enchanted castle. Now she began to live. She watched the development of this new life with analytic coolness. Her emotions, she observed, were under his control, and progressed in the proportion of his. Any new access

of feeling was experienced first by him, and thereby transferred to her own heart. It was *love*, but unconscious; for love, so long as it exists only in thought, is a dream: a dream that may haunt the memory a lifetime, but still a dream. Love, however much we may have studied it from books or people, always comes to us a mystery and a surprise.

And were papa and mamma as blind to the true state of the matter as their daughter? The old gentleman was innocently oblivious. Ophelia was engaged,—her word of honor given to another man,—*that* settled it in his mind. Of course she would never be such a fool as to fall in love with one whom she could not marry. Besides, Kingsley had *nothing*—absolutely nothing—except his reporter's salary, which every one knew was not munificent, and the wealthy and respectable wholesale merchant was not one to be lightly set aside, nor to be set aside at all. Even these slight reflections had but a vague existence in Mr. Berges's mind, so unimportant did the matter seem. Ophelia was regaining her health, and he saw nothing to be disturbed about.

But mamma's keen gray eyes had not been idle all this time, Mrs. Berges comprehended the situation thoroughly from the first. She did not interfere, because the time for interference had not yet arrived. To warn Ophelia would only open her eyes and make altogether too serious a matter of it. When the needful time had elapsed, she dropped North a friendly little note, inviting him to come down and spend a few days with them. Not a hint as to the true reason of her desire for his presence, but rather an intimation pointing in another direction: "I am sure Ophelia misses you," wrote the diplomat, "though she would not own it for the world."

In the mean time she did not scruple to make her disapproval and mistrust known to its object,—not to Ophelia; that would not fail to arouse her sense of justice and call forth a stronger sympathy for her mis-

used friend. She never allowed an opportunity to escape for making the sensitive young Southerner as uncomfortable as possible. The result was that he hated Mrs. Berges and ignored her presence, whenever that was possible.

In the third week of their stay at Crab Orchard, Ophelia received a note from her affianced, with whom she had kept up a dry correspondence, containing the pleasing intelligence that he would be with her that very evening.

"Oh, dear," exclaimed Ophelia, to her mamma, "I wish he would stay at home! *I* should have waited for an invitation, I think."

"It is only natural that he should want to see you once in a while," returned Mrs. Berges; "and it is cruel of you, Ophelia, to want to keep him away from you so long."

This shrewd speech flattered Ophelia, and it reproved her. There was not the least hint at Kingsley, but it led her to reflect upon her willingness to *his* perpetual presence, and to blush over the reflection. To perceive a fault, with Ophelia, was to institute immediate reformation.

That evening Mr. Kingsley promenaded the secluded little walk alone. He had a note-book in his hand, and wrote rapidly as he walked; but now and then he looked toward the hotel expectantly. At length he closed his book and walked toward the house. He found Ophelia upon the veranda talking with some young ladies in that cool, conventional way that reminded him of the first time he had seen her. At his approach, the group broke up and scattered abroad, leaving Ophelia to him. All his work of the past weeks was undone; he found her precisely as he had found her upon that memorable morning a little over two weeks ago,—cool, reserved, formal, and apparently utterly devoid of cordiality or enthusiasm. He gave no sign of surprise or disquietude, but observed her

attentively. They talked upon old subjects which had interested both, but the interest seemed to have gone out of them.

"You are not well," he said abruptly, and with deep sympathy in look and tone.

"I have a slight headache," she returned, carelessly.

Just then the daily stage drove up. Kingsley was not interested in new arrivals, and did not look around, consequently missed seeing the dignified gentleman who got out, and who, when he had spoken to the porter about his baggage, came straight toward their quiet corner. Therefore he was not prepared for the startled look and agitated manner with which his companion rose to meet the stranger. But he noted the familiar manner of his greeting, and her shy reception of it; and when he had bowed a cool acknowledgment of an introduction to "Mr. North," excused himself and left them alone. She saw no more of him that evening, nor the next day, until late in the afternoon, when he came to bid her good-by.

"Not off?" exclaimed Mr. Berges, shaking him cordially by the hand.

"Yes," he returned; "I have idled here too long already."

"Come and see us when we return to the city," said Ophelia, giving her hand, and looking at him kindly.

Papa re-echoed the invitation, and Mr. Kingsley promised that he would. He bowed haughtily to Mrs. Berges and Mr. North, and was off.

"Who is that young man?" inquired Mr. North, with evidences of displeasure in his tone.

Mr. Berges explained: son of an old friend; fine family; talented young gentleman, etc.

Mr. North was no better pleased than before. "He has the important air of one who governed the universe," he said; and thereafter the "talented young gentleman" was mentioned no more.

Do you miss the crime and bloodshed, the hairbreadth escapes and thrilling adventure with which it is considered necessary for the popular novelist to spice his narration? Do you begin to sigh for a steamboat explosion, a railroad disaster,—*anything* to set your pulses into a livelier beat,—as the disdainful Israelites, dieting upon manna, sighed for the flesh-pots of Egypt?

Thrilling adventure, I fear me, John, is unwholesome food for the human mind; though there must, now and then, drift across the most uneventful life some soul-stirring events.

But no! looking into your truthful eyes, I perceive that you are neither dissatisfied nor bored. And as I see no *Mrs.* John anywhere about, it requires a considerable degree of self-denial for me to refrain from saying how much I like you, John. I never could see any pleasure in liking people if we may not tell them. Yet if I should say anything of the kind, the world would frown and cavil, for it is the way of the world to compress one's thoughts and actions into the narrow limits of its own code and rule, so that its people stand far apart; even those grouped together beneath the same roof are often separated, like clustered stars, by inconceivable space.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOPE DEFERRED AND HOPE VERIFIED.

ADELE, in her quiet country home, sat by her invalid mother, more patient than of old, but no more satisfied. Ophelia's letters were short and unsatisfactory, chronicling simply current events, with an undercurrent of listlessness and haste to be through, that was peculiarly aggravating. Tom was still away. They had heard from him once, and then he was engaged in keeping a

drinking-saloon in St. Louis. Cheering news! Herve was always at work,—or if he rested a moment, it was with a book in his hand. He was perfecting himself in his medical studies, and preparing himself for his last course, in the ensuing winter.

Fan and Gertie, her two elder sisters, were no company for Adele, nor she for them. They were worthy young women,—staid, frugal, and industrious. They were never idle. They wore anxious, careworn faces, and toiled ceaselessly, as if pursued by some inexorable duty, as tireless and persistent as poor Io's gadfly! Their talk and their continual thought was work, work. Occasionally they read a scientific treatise under the impression that they were "cultivating their minds." Otherwise they read nothing. They kept the house in beautiful order: not a speck or spot about it. They cooked and scrubbed, they washed and ironed, they swept and knit and sewed. Ah! those were superior girls. But the naughty boys *would* bring in dust and dirt, and throw their hats and coats about, and soil and tear their clothes. They had no reverence for clean things. And so the sisters scolded and fretted while they worked, and wrought wrinkles and ugly expressions upon their countenances.

"Why not be more moderate?" suggested Adele; but they held themselves stiffly, and made no reply. They never spoke to their idle sister when they could help it, they felt themselves so superior.

They saw no merit or importance in other work than such as they performed,—labor of the hands. Productions that neither fed nor clothed the body, labor which produced no material result, was silly nonsense. Could people *live* upon the sciences? Let them try it. Was any one's life ever prolonged or made more comfortable by a poem? Poets and philosophers—the idle race—had to be fed by somebody's honest hands. The word "idle" in their estimation comprised the whole calendar of vices, and to them the word conveyed but

one meaning,—not occupied in manual labor. Unhappy the luckless individuals who were the helpless recipients of their "much serving"! for these two martyred saints made their burden grievous to be borne. And so of their greatest virtue they made a fault.

Adele thought her sisters' industrious ways extremely disagreeable. She resolved not to imitate them, and so fell into the opposite error. Adele was not naturally indolent. Work had never been presented to her in the light of helpful, loving service, therefore she hated it. A *real* responsibility would have made a different creature of her. Her sisters, though they made her feel her worthlessness, never asked her assistance, and when she did anything, generally found occasion to do it over, which was, to say the least, discouraging.

"If you want me in the kitchen," she said, at length, "please let me know. I cannot afford to stand perpetually at the door, on the watch for something to do." And with that she contented herself with doing little or nothing. She kept her own room in order, and herself in tidy array, to the intense scorn of her sisters, for she remembered how Sid had invited himself out to spend a few days.

She felt sure that he would come, and as the summer advanced and the invalid grew better, she sat by the window and watched the road,—the dull, white road, where the heat danced all the long sultry day; the bare, monotonous road, where only the farmer's teams jogged and the farmer's lads trotted. Nothing beautiful in the scene, except the sky, which spread abroad its gauzy wings. Ah, the hot silence, the constrained patience, the weary waiting, waiting for—she knew not what!

Through these lonely midsummer days, Adele had two dangerous companions,—Sid's books and her own untiring imagination. The books were all from brilliant and unscrupulous pens. Victor Hugo, Madame George Sand, Goethe, Richter, Lord Byron, Shelley, and even Shakspeare, were represented in that small

package. She not only read them, she *studied* them through the silent, monotonous days; and her fertile brain founded visions upon them, and roved through dangerous fields.

Imagination,—the wayward enchantress,—who rolls the wheels of her splendid chariot upon the very verge of the unfathomable abysses of forbidden knowledge; who dashes recklessly among the profound, sublime, and mysterious revelations of nature; who breaks irreverently into the synods of learned religionists, and hobnobs familiarly with the tempter; who led Lucifer and his hosts into destruction;—who can compute the wrong she instigates?

The summer was on the wane. Books nor dreams can satisfy the hungry heart, and Adele had grown sick of her life, which seemed to have become a vast stagnation. The scarlet sunset was glowing, the dusty road lay cooling in deepening shadows, when a tall figure stood upon the old porch and knocked. At every knock, her waiting heart had said, "It is he;" but it had spoken falsely, and now she scarcely stirred from her careless position to say "Come in!"

Ah, how she started!—how the dark eyes dilated, as the familiar figure stepped upon the threshold, and the familiar eyes looked into hers, smiling! He had come, then,—at last. For a moment she sat motionless.

"You look inhospitable," he said; "I shall go back."

He made a movement as if to leave, when she started up and came forward, as stately and self-poised as of old.

"I had given you up," she said, giving him her hand, and looking flushed and happy.

Then she inquired about Ophelia and her city friends. Sid could tell her but little. He had scarcely seen Ophelia all summer. He had been absent from the city nearly all the season, but gave no account as to his whereabouts.

To say the truth, Sid's summer had not sped on golden wings. It had been consumed in trying to reconcile himself to the bestowal of his precious self upon an unattractive heiress, who, just as he had succeeded in conquering his repugnance to the deed, bluntly signified a willingness to dispense with his attentions altogether. However, Sid was not quite so crushed as the heiress afterwards represented, though he regretted the loss of time. After such a wearisome summer the thought of Adele and rural solitudes was irresistible.

"You have been reading," he said, looking at the books upon the window-ledge. "How did you like the selection?"

"Very well," she replied. "I admire Byron more than Shakspeare. He is more earnest. His thoughts seem irrepressible and overmastering, while Shakspeare is deliberate and calculating."

Sid nodded his head and smiled.

"And Shelley?" he inquired.

"Is scarcely so vigorous, but more sincere and more delicate than either Byron or Shakspeare."

"And which of the two German poets do you like the most?"

"My taste, it seems, never accords with the popular verdict," she replied. "I like Richter, who is always genial and gentle, better than Goethe, who is sometimes, like Shakspeare, coarse."

Sid elevated his eyebrows. "Quite a critic," he said, and then he looked about the room. "I have certainly seen this place in my dreams; it looks so familiar. Not a bad-looking place. I wonder how old it is?"

Seeing that he looked dusty and warm, she conducted him to the room set apart for visitors, with the sober, business air of a professional chambermaid. The door closed upon Sid, she set forth upon the performance of a disagreeable mission,—that of informing

her mother and sisters of the arrival of the city guest. The news was not so disagreeably received as she had imagined. Here was an opportunity, thought the sisters, of ridding themselves forever of this Joseph, who wore such lofty airs; and it should be no fault of theirs if she was not speedily out of the way; and Mrs. Hughes, naturally hospitable and curious in regard to strangers, was never displeased at the advent of a new subject.

As to the old house, she felt strangely indifferent whether he liked it or not; her mind was filled with other things. Sid had nothing whereof to complain in the reception extended him by the family. To the true Kentuckian there is nothing too good for the stranger, let him be rich or poor; and these were guileless and unsuspecting people.

Three days sped by on downy wings. Sitting in the cool, old-fashioned parlor, discussing books and people, and everything, or walking up and down the shadowy aisles of the grand old orchard with a beautiful woman,—a woman who was wise and gifted, but not to an overshadowing extent,—was an employment entirely congenial to Sid's tastes; but it could not last forever.

The last afternoon of his stay he proposed to explore the neighboring woods. A toilsome journey through hot, unshaded meadows, and they enter a palace of dreams. The high dome of dense foliage which spread above them was flecked with shafts of golden sunshine and luminous shadows. Dim vistas of dusky depths led off from either side, and festoons of tangled vines adorned the way.

"Ah!" exclaimed the voluptuary with a sigh of deep delight,—"what ecstasy to dwell in such a spot and in such companionship forever!"

"There are gnats and mosquitoes in these woods," remarked Adele. She looked like a wood-nymph in her simple lawn dress, with frills of softest lace about the neck and wrists. She carried her hat in her

hand, and the roguish zephyr rumpled and tossed her curling hair.

"I am tired of playing propriety," was Sid's silent reflection. "It has become a task which requires too great an effort for my self-indulging temperament: at least there can be nothing said against *looking* love. Who would think of blaming me under such strong provocation?"

Adele was talking of a flower,—a rich midsummer blossom of the brightest scarlet, which he had gathered for her; and he was listening abstractedly, thinking more of her than of what she said; and his soft answers and tender looks began to thrill vaguely upon some sensitive chords in her nature. She began to open her eyes to the fact that Sid was making love to her, though in a vague, non-committal way. A half-scornful, half-defiant smile curved her lip. "I know you, Sid Waltman," was her answering thought, "and I am not afraid of your soft speeches and meaning looks; for I know them to be as utterly hollow and treacherous as the caresses of Paolo Orsini, who, folding his wife in a warm and loving embrace, slipped a noose about her neck and strangled her."

Confident of her own strength and self-dominion, she met the speaking glances of his handsome dark eyes fearlessly. Sid looked like a god to-day,—like those mythical and mischievous ideals of wisdom and grace whom the poetic Grecian ignorantly worshiped. The fire of noble thought burned in his eye, and a fraternal love for the whole world lit up his perfect features. Adele had never seen him look so animated, so strangely moved. And as he poured forth his thoughts in a continuous flow of singularly beautiful expressions, he seemed to be speaking under the force of some rapturous constraining power wholly beyond his will; and Adele reproached herself and said, "He is better than I had thought."

And now began a silent battle in her heart. She

did not want to think him good; she tried to rouse the old antagonism and mistrust, and felt the lulling influence of his looks and words with a gathering fear. But she rested upon her own strength of will for support, and that, alas! was as "a reed shaken by the wind." She looked abroad, at the soft, bright tints in earth and sky,—everywhere but into those thrilling eyes.

"There! Do you hear that?" she exclaimed, with a look of relief, as the sound of a horn and baying hounds came up the valley. "The hunters are on a chase. Let us sit here and wait; they will be coming this way presently."

She enthroned herself upon a ledge of rock which jutted from the hill-side and formed a convenient seat, with back and arms. Leaning an elbow upon the arm of her rustic bench, she looked anxiously down the shadowy ravine, to see the hunters and their hounds drift by in the distance. When they were out of sight and hearing, Sid sat down beside her.

"How I wish that I had been reared in the grand solitudes of a country life," he said, with a sigh,—"away from the fume and brawl of the jostling crowd! Then, perhaps, some of the better qualities of my nature would have had some chance for development."

For a short space he looked down upon the tangled and motley mass of foliage, rocks, brush, and dead leaves beneath them; then turning to Adele, began to speak of *himself:* a thing he seldom did to any one. All the hopes, misfortunes, ambitions, and misdoings of his changeful life; softening nothing, concealing nothing, he opened to her inspection a perspective of his inner life and growth; his struggles, his sympathetic longings, and the ruthless tramp of the giant Circumstance upon many a blossoming good; and so he entwined her sympathies with all his life, and drew forth all her pity and her tenderness, until he felt it enfold him like a garment, as if it sought to shield him from

all life's storms; then he gently, but firmly, took her hand, and looking deep into her eyes, poured into her soul all the flood of passion which so deeply agitated his.

Adele tried to get her hand away, but it was fast. She tried to be calm and commanding, but her heart beat fearfully, and she discovered with terror that her strength was gone. He perceived his victory and her alarm, and with well simulated humility subdued her fears. "The time of which I have dreamed, sleeping or waking, ever since I first knew you, Adele, has come. You love me! you are mine! and there is no use in striving against the decrees of Fate, which are irrevocable."

He placed his hand at the back of her head, amid her soft brown hair which twined about his fingers, and, drawing her nearer, bent his face to hers and softly kissed her lips. Always deliberate in his movements, always gentle, he had overmastered her imperious and willful nature.

Suddenly she sprang from his grasp. "I must go home!" she exclaimed, and began to climb the hill. Sid followed, smiling quietly to himself. When they had reached the edge of the woods he stopped.

"Adele, sit down here," he said; "you are in sight of home; you look flushed and tired, and I have something to say to you."

She hesitated a moment, then silently obeyed him.

"You know my circumstances, Adele,—my whole life; you know that I cannot marry now. Can you find enough love for me in your heart to make you willing to wait for me one, perhaps *two* years?"

She turned and looked at him fixedly. No blushes, no tremors now: her feelings had become too profound for such transient expression. "If I could *only* believe you! If I could only trust you!"

"Adele, I will swear, if you wish."

"Oh, no! no!" she exclaimed, hurriedly, "do not swear. I will take your word. Here is my hand. In two years——"

"It is mine," he said, clasping it in both of his.

A little, sober-coated bird, perched upon the bough above them, began to sing an accompaniment to the low, thrilling tones of the lovers beneath. Innumerable were the castles they builded,—visions as brilliant and illusory as the Fata Morgana which fills the waters of Messina with its vapory cities. The little songster grew dissatisfied with his part in the performance, suddenly ceased his quavering note, and flew away. A gorgeous sunset painted its evanescent glory upon the western sky. The lovers walked home in the fading splendor of its light, and the singular antique ring upon Sid's finger was transferred to Adele's amid solemn protestations of truth and constancy.

You see, John, I always keep you with me. I do not heap up great black clouds of mysteries, to which you have no clue, between us. I like to make plain, deliberate investigation of whatever springs into our path, instead of massing up impenetrable walls of unknown material, which, when it comes to the winnowing, discovers three grains of wheat to the bushel of chaff. I prefer that we harvest our scanty crop with less ado.

CHAPTER XIV.

"GWYNNETH'S WAKING HOUR."

"MAMMA, if you are willing, I should like to make Adele a visit of two or three weeks. I know she would be glad to have me."

"They are poor, Ophelia, and Mrs. Hughes is in bad health. I wouldn't go there now: it would be an imposition."

"Well, then," after a long pause, in which the daughter looked out upon the beautiful grounds of Crab Orchard with a frown, "let us go home. I am tired to death of everything here."

"Impossible!" said mamma, coolly. "There is cholera in the city."

Mrs. Berges lifted her clear blue eyes, and inspected her daughter keenly. Her daughter interpreted the look, and returned it unflinchingly.

"A week ago you thought the place delightful."

"Oh, yes, the Bentons were here then, and they were so interesting. I never met any one I liked better than Louise and Mary Benton."

"Should you like West Baden, mamma?" said Mr. Berges, looking up from that work of John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty," of which he was very fond. "I believe we have never been there."

"No," said mamma, decidedly. "I should prefer some quiet place near the city, and so, I think, would Ophelia."

"There is Craycroft's,—about five or six miles out,—a nice quiet place, if that is what you want."

Mrs. Berges made a few inquiries in regard to conveniences, etc. Ophelia looked unappreciative, but upon being called upon for her verdict could find no fault.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Walter, who had just come in to beg a string for his balloon from sister or mamma, "there won't be enough boys there to play base-ball."

"Settle it among yourselves," said Mr. Berges, turning his back upon the party. "Go where you like. I'll be satisfied, if the rest of you are."

After a little more discussion, Craycroft's was decided upon for the remainder of the season; and after a little preliminary negotiation with its owner, the Berges party transferred themselves and their baggage to that beautiful country-house. The grounds were spacious and shaded, the family was small, and there were no

other guests. No excuse for complaint from any save Walter, whose base-ball was interrupted.

Mr. North came out twice a week. He was as distant and ceremonious as usual. He talked of little except business affairs, and generally looked worn and abstracted. He had sustained several heavy losses recently, which he explained to Ophelia, entering into the dryest detail. But Ophelia's mind refused to take hold upon the matter. Strive as she would she could not comprehend what it was, about bank stock, insurance, revenue, duty, taxes, and I know not what, that disturbed him and kept his brow clouded with anxiety and care.

Oftentimes, through these quiet, dreamy days, Ophelia thought of her new friend, who had flashed upon her prosaic life like a picture from a romance, and wondered sadly if she would ever see him again. She did not love him. Ophelia *knew* she did not love him; but for all that the long summer days wearied her because of him, and all the calm and ease went out of her luxurious life. She walked alone in the long bright afternoons, but the joyous loveliness of the scene only created in her mind a feeling of hopeless alienation. She could not be gay with the meadows and wood and laughing streams.

As she sat one afternoon amid the thick shadows of the elms, a book in her hand, and her dull mind traveling listlessly over its pages, she heard the little gate swing to. She glanced up with stupid curiosity; but how quickly the expression changed to one of keen interest! Who was it with her father? Did she not know?

And now he had her hand, and was looking deep into her eyes. But what changes were in his!—a little weariness, sharp scrutiny, and much haughtiness; and how coldly they glanced away after the first deep glance! He had forgotten! Ah, this fickle, fickle world! While *her* thoughts had remained stationary, just where he had left them, *his* had passed out of the old mood and

gone on into a new one, of which she comprehended nothing. He seemed utterly strange to her. All the gentleness was gone from his manner; it was more haughty and less kind.

They talked and acted like entire strangers, and when Mr. Berges had gone into the house and left them alone, it was even worse. They could scarcely think of anything at all to say.

"I think you are very unlike you were at Crab Orchard," said Ophelia, abruptly, when they had sat for some time in silence.

"How am I different?" he inquired, with a slight smile.

"You are not quite so—you seem *hardened*," she said, some of the old color springing into her cheeks.

"Hardened! It is well to be hardened,—at least for drifting, defenseless crafts like myself,—so that we may suffer as little damage as possible from hard knocks against the projecting angles of heavier-bodied structures, such as are well-ballasted, bravely rigged and manned."

"But hard bodies get shivered sometimes."

"Oh, yes; everything is subject to the contingencies of chance. The best rule that I can originate for the preservation of human happiness is, always shun whatever promises to be unpleasant."

"That is, if it gives no promise of doing good," suggested Ophelia.

"Oh, no," he returned, carelessly; "I do not care to do or be good. I enjoy life as it is, and have no inclination for 'climbing up the ever-climbing wave,' in the hope of making some one else happy. I love pleasure,—such little snatches as I can get,—and am willing to accept the consequences of indulgence, whatever they may be. You must know, Miss Berges, I am not what you would style a 'worthy young man.'"

"If I had never heard you talk before, I should be inclined to think you heartless. But it is useless for

you to be putting on a mask now. I know you too well to be deceived."

"Suppose I were to tell you that the other was the mask."

"Then," said Ophelia, sternly, "I would agree with you in esteeming yourself an unworthy young man. Any one who clings to wrong, when he knows it to be wrong, simply because he enjoys it, is contemptible."

She arose, unconsciously, looking toward the woods.

"Should you like to walk?" he asked, observing the romantic path which led toward the object of her contemplation.

"If you have not been treading pavement all day."

"I have been perched upon a stool in a dingy little office, and have scarcely stirred all day."

The question being settled, they walked toward the cool, green wood. The way was rough. It suited her mood, which was to *conquer*. He never offered her any assistance. He let her make her way across the rocky places, the ruts, and rivulets as best she could. His manner was as chill as a breeze from the North Pole. It was plain he had not even friendship for her. She had had all sorts of experiences, was used to reverential admiration, intense, devoted love, almost adoration; but cool indifference—and that where she had desired a warmer feeling—was new to her, entirely, shockingly new. For a short distance she said nothing and pouted; but, as *he* said nothing and was serene, that did not last long.

What did she want? Ophelia never once thought to ask herself that question. She wanted his *love*, and was ready to cry because he would not give it her then and there.

I will do Ophelia justice. *That* was not all that excited and disturbed her. She was disappointed in him. She had found a blemish too important to be overlooked. And moral deformity was as hateful to her

as moral beauty was lovely. She felt angry with him for having appropriated a place in her heart upon false grounds. She wanted him to be good, how *intensely* she wanted him to be good! and that from the very first. Why the want of moral excellence in her betrothed had not disturbed her to such an extent she had not thought to inquire.

His presence, for which she had longed, brought her no comfort. Comfort!—it had brought her despair. Her hope of establishing an influence over him that was to lead him to better things was gone. What use to talk to him when he listened to her with scorn? But she *must* talk. Her mind was too thoroughly aroused to keep silence. She felt that there were intonations in her voice to correspond with her feelings, but she did not care.

His answers were prompt but careless; and when every nerve in her body was strung to its highest tension he yawned covertly and looked bored. Ophelia had become accustomed to praise and a ready yielding to her will. Her life hitherto had flown smoothly and without interruption. Whosoever she desired to attract immediately became her devoted friend and admirer. It was not to be regretted, perhaps, that she had at length come upon some one who had the heart to snub her and take some of the vanity out of her. The walk was a tiresome one to Ophelia. Whether it had proved more satisfactory to Kingsley was a matter beyond any one's power to fathom. He brightened up, however, over the iced tea, sherbet, and cookies, which they had upon a little round table under the elms, and said some very witty things.

Mrs. Berges, who was skilled in fashionable small talk, and whose conversational resources were known to be inexhaustible, was upon this occasion haughtily silent. The gentlemen, thrown upon their own resources, resorted to politics and the crops. So dull, so dreadfully dull was it, after the edibles were con-

sumed, that the two gentlemen immediately betook themselves to the city. Mr. Kingsley said that he would call again, when invited to do so by Ophelia. But his words sounded mechanical. She looked after him, as he went down the graveled walk with her father, looking so erect, so strong, so capable and full of power to work great good or great evil, and unconsciously sighed. Her sorrow was for *his* future, and not for her own, though she had no hope of ever seeing him again.

"It is exceedingly strange to me why your father should have such a liking for that young man," said Mrs. Berges, as she and Ophelia sat alone under the elms, "when he knows how utterly unworthy of trust or confidence he is. There is nothing in the way of deception and villainy that I could not believe him capable of. He is false, utterly false. He has no honor, no principle. With his deceiving looks and his flattering tongue he has broken the heart of more than one fond, trusting girl, and would like some more employment of the same sort, no doubt."

The twilight was deepening, and the shadows lay thick about the old elm-trees where they sat. Ophelia was silent and still.

"I never liked his father," continued Mrs. Berges. "He was an arrogant, self-willed, supercilious man, and I always resisted the influence he exerted over your father. As for his mother, *I hated her!*"

The intensity of the tone in which the latter clause was uttered obviated the necessity of further comment. Mrs. Berges, though a loquacious woman, was not communicative, and had never been known to confide more than ordinary incidents of her youth. Here the conversation closed.

Ophelia went early to her room. She was very miserable; for she felt that the friend to whom she had given a place of honor in her heart was unworthy of esteem, and his unworthiness bore as heavily upon her

mind as if it had been her own. There was but one right course for her to pursue: that was to put him out of her thoughts forever. And before that could be accomplished much misery must ensue. Few ever succeeded in penetrating into that guarded heart of Ophelia's, and these were permanently enshrined there.

She wondered how it was that she had been so deceived in him. She knew her mother's prejudice against him, and there lingered in her mind a faint belief that her mother's credulity, which was easily biased in that direction, had been imposed upon by some malicious gossip. But what mattered it now whether the information were true or false? Her dream of friendship was over. He would not be likely ever to come again; he had that look in his eye when he left.

But he *did* come again. Mr. North was with her under the elms when he sauntered up the walk. He looked tired and warm, but there was a light of pleasant anticipation in his eye. Ophelia looked at him in wonder. He was not at all like the same person. He shook hands cordially with Mr. North and sat down in front of Ophelia, and not very far away. All the stiffness and formality had disappeared from his manner. He was voluble, brilliant, and Mr. North, who was not gifted with conversational powers, was constrained to listen in silence.

It had been a dull afternoon with Ophelia, and she was not sorry to be led off from the contemplation of Mr. North's business affairs into the fairy-peopled realms of book-land. She tried to be reserved and on her guard, but his thoughts, coming to her like her own, only clothed in a richer, more elegant garb, enkindled surprise and delight beyond her power of concealment. Her betrothed was not one who would willingly suffer a diminution of importance by comparison, so he soon transferred himself to the veranda and the more appreciative society of Mrs. Berges.

For the time Mr. Kingsley seemed to abandon himself to perfect enjoyment. Ophelia looked at him in utter wonder. Whence, in heaven's name, came this strange attractiveness? It was not of her own imagining, she knew; for had she not, from the very first, felt *drawn* toward him by some unknown and irresistible power?

Her faith in the soundness of his principles was reinstated. She believed in and trusted him once more. He gave her a few glimpses of his past life, which revealed a deep reverence and love for his mother and for all good women. It was a nature undoubtedly not to be *reconciled* to falsehood and hypocrisy, much less made a participant in their crooked ways,—a nature painfully erect and unyielding. He did not remain long, but promised an early repetition of his visit. Ophelia joined the party upon the veranda with a happy heart. Everything was permanently established now. They would *always* be good friends; and life, under such conditions, looked fair and promising.

"Why did Kingsley leave so soon?" inquired Mr. Berges, who had just arrived from the city. "He is a very entertaining young man, and I should have liked his company awhile myself."

"He had some business to attend to this evening," said Ophelia.

"*I* should not be inconsolable if his business should deprive us of his society altogether," said Mrs. Berges. "I do not approve of his visiting here at all."

"He is liberally endowed with conceit," said Mr. North. "It is quite evident that he entirely approves of himself."

"Kingsley is sharp and witty, and he knows it; but he has no bad traits or bad habits that I know of," said Mr. Berges. "His father, whom he resembles very much, was a good friend of mine in our younger days, and it is my wish that his son receive all the courtesy and attention that is due an honored guest."

That settled and closed the question. Though an indulgent husband and father, Mr. Berges, whenever it was requisite, could take as firm and decided a stand as the occasion demanded; and in such instances his wishes were not likely to be disregarded.

Mr. Kingsley came very often now, and was always kindly received by Ophelia. Mrs. Berges was seldom present, and when she was, generally diligently occupied herself with her Bible commentaries. The Bible itself she seldom read. Commentaries did away with the necessity of study, and that she considered an excellent economy of time. At such times she was so filled with admiration of her own superior goodness, that, failing to catch the entire meaning of such passages as "Love thy neighbor as thyself," her countenance assumed a proud and scornful expression. And poor Kingsley, who was a publican and a sinner, and in possession of none of that divine spirit which constraineth us to love our enemies, felt his dislike increase with every time they met. "A good woman, no doubt," he thought, observing the commentaries, "but unfortunately repulsive."

Then he fell to wondering how it was that piety was so attractive in some and so repulsive in others. Be not deceived, my good friend; *true* piety is never repulsive. It is hard to attain and to retain,—very hard indeed, oftentimes,—but it is always beautiful. Some very good people may have some very disagreeable propensities, but it is not the *goodness* which makes them disagreeable. Wherever there are sinfulness and repulsion there is evil; and Mrs. Berges was one of those persons who imagine themselves pious when they are only ill-natured.

One afternoon Kingsley came late, and looked harassed and troubled. He said that he had been writing all day and was tired. Would Ophelia like a little walk? Yes. She was tired, too. She had been all the afternoon striving to entertain Mr. North, who refused to

be entertained; and there was nothing she would like better than a walk to the woods. *This* time he took her hand and helped her over the rough places. He talked rapidly, and looked at her often,—earnest, protracted looks, which reached her heart and sprung a new sensation there; a feeling which, once planted, was to grow from that time forth and forever. He had never looked at her like *that* before.

With a sudden shock Ophelia awoke from her blind, her stupid, ignorant trance. He saw her turn pale. "I must go back," she said. "I do not feel well at all."

"Sit down here awhile first," he returned; "it is shady and pleasant, and you will feel better. I have something to say to you."

"You can say it some other time; I must go to the house now."

"Ophelia, you must hear it *now*." He seized her dress and held her fast. "You have let me love you; you shall listen! I know that you are betrothed, but you shall know that I love you. *He* does not. There is not one spark of love in him. Choose between us."

There was a sort of fury in his eye as he said this, holding fast to her dress. Her eyes were fixed upon him; she could not remove them.

"Let me go!" she exclaimed, distractedly.

"Not until you answer me!" was the firm reply.

"I cannot! I cannot! There is no longer any choice for me. Oh, mamma! mamma!"

Kingsley started and looked around, expecting to meet the stern, cold eyes of the woman upon whom she called in so reproachful a tone; but there was no one there. Unconsciously he had loosed his hold of her dress, and without another word Ophelia sped away. At the gate she saw her father coming down the avenue, and stopped to wait for Kingsley. Both came up at about the same time.

"Tut, tut!" exclaimed the old gentleman, laughing.

"You are a little too large, daughter, for such races. Kingsley does not approve of it either, I see. It *was* a little rude to outrun your escort. She is regaining her health, and red cheeks besides, and growing so rude that I shall have to take her back to the city to improve her manners."

Mr. Kingsley laughed a little constrainedly; said she needed no improvement that he could see, she was too good as it was; and then inquired if Mr. Berges was going back to the city.

Yes, Mr. Berges was going back. There was to be a convention that evening for some local improvement, and he did not wish to miss a single opportunity of extending improvements. They would walk to the depot together. He was always very paternal in his manner toward Kingsley, and gave him much fatherly counsel whenever they were together. "You must not forsake us when Ophelia leaves us. It is natural for young people to like the society of those of their own age best; but they should not forget that the company of the experienced is more improving."

"Your daughter is to be married soon?"

"Yes, though I do not know how soon. North is anxious for an immediate union, and there is nothing to prevent it as far as I know. He is an honorable, sober, and industrious gentleman, and will make a good husband, I think. I am very happy in the thought that Ophelia, in case of my death, will be provided with a comfortable home and the means for preserving her life from rude cares. Ophelia has been too tenderly reared for a life of poverty. She is not the sort of woman to turn her talents and accomplishments into daily bread, and a life of toil and anxiety would soon bring her to her grave. She is not anxious for the marriage, I own, but that is because she does not wish to leave her own home. She has no objections to North, and I have positive proof of his attachment for her; and loving daughters like Ophelia make loving

wives, no matter how reluctantly they yield themselves to marriage."

They were nearing the depot. Kingsley was silent, and the old gentleman looked unusually serious and thoughtful.

"Young man," he resumed at length, "you have a very strong hold upon my affections. I want to be truthful and candid with you, for I want to stand as high in your affectionate regard as you do in mine; therefore, I will conceal nothing. It is not merely because you are the son of a very dear friend, nor yet because of your own admirable character, that I love you; it is because I loved your mother."

Kingsley turned his head away. "You are a good man," he said in a strange voice. "I do not deserve your affection; *but I am going to try to deserve it.* Mr. Berges, I love your daughter, but I here renounce all endeavor to obtain her love in return. Oh, sir! it is very hard for me to do this, for I had determined to win her, cost what it might; and now I have no hope—*not one vestige of hope*—of happiness here or hereafter."

Mr. Berges was wiping his eyes. He stopped, patted the young man on the back, and, smiling through his tears, replied,—

"Ah! that was very bravely done, my boy. You do not disappoint me. It is a hard battle, but *I* have fought it and come off conqueror, and so can you. You have not told Ophelia anything of this?"

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed the young man, recklessly, "I told her this afternoon. That was why she was running away from me."

"Ophelia is a good girl," said the old gentleman, with pride. "You are both young, and will get over this. I regret more deeply than ever before that she is not my own daughter, for then you should have her; but, poor as you both are,—and I am not able to help you,—it is best that you should give her up. It will not hurt you to have loved a good woman, though you

lose her. Some day you may even take a pleasure in being kind to her children."

"I must go away," interrupted Kingsley. "I cannot endure the thought of her marrying that man. I should be tempted to do some mischief."

"Perhaps it would be better for awhile," he returned, thoughtfully; and then they walked on in silence.

"You do not seem surprised," suddenly exclaimed Kingsley. "You did not know——?"

"Yes," returned Mr. Berges, smiling gravely. "I saw it all, but not until recently, or I should have spared you all this pain."

"You could not have spared me, for it all began the very moment my eyes first fell upon her," said Kingsley, firmly.

"But an early separation——"

"Could have made no difference," persisted the young man. But he intended to bear it as bravely as he could, though he never expected to be happy—never!

"If you work for happiness, I can tell you now your labor is lost. Do whatever your conscience tells you is right, and that will place you in as comfortable relations with life as is possible in this world. You are young and strong,—too strong to be overmastered by *anything*. Ophelia is tender-hearted. Your confession of love has, no doubt, established a sympathetic feeling for you in her mind; and if she sees you unhappy upon her account she will be deeply troubled."

"She shall not know," said Kingsley, proudly.

Is there too much love in my book, John? It may be that you are "elderly," that your love-experiences all lie in the dead past; and, your romance all over and filed away amid the musty records of "long ago," you are prone to pronounce all like experiences "nonsense," and "youthful folly." It is my belief that the greater portion of this "elderly" impatience with

youth's folly arises from a petulant regret that such pleasures have drifted forever beyond its own reach; or that it has grasped *bubbles* and is only left empty-handed. Well, have patience with me, if you can; for I too will be growing old soon, and then perhaps I may write you dissertations upon the sciences, or metaphysical treatises, which you can doze comfortably over of an evening; and be ready to chime in when you aver that "all flesh is grass," and "there is nothing new under the sun—nothing!" Perhaps I may even attain that lofty degree of unconcern for the affairs of this world, as to feel entire indifference whether its people love each other, and practice the sublime virtues of patience with each other's faults and failings, and uncomplaining endurance of wrong for right, or tread ruthlessly through life by their own favorite paths, evading whatever is unpleasant, and appropriating whatever increases their individual comfort.

But no, John,—you may be elderly,—(I confess to a penchant for elderly people,—those whose feelings intensify—as do all good and beautiful things of real, intrinsic value—with the flight of time); your romance may be a thing of the past; but not of a *dead* past, or you would not be here, within this cloistered retreat, shut out from the clack of the world, listening with that courteous, complacent air of profound attention to such unpretentious thoughts as filter mildly through my brain. Your sympathies are broad and deep: they lie all along the path of life, and do not confine themselves to the immediate period or the immediate phase.

And say, John, in all your experiences, have you not found it true that there is nothing more real, and nothing more necessary in this life, than—love? Ah, that sly, that mischievous smile! I must come and pat that wise, cunning head of yours, John, if it *is* a little bald. (Reverence, I fear, was omitted in my composition.) Sir, I speak of love in a general and abstract sense. I *might* have related my story to a *feminine* auditor, only

she would not have listened so patiently, nor smiled and complimented and flattered so assiduously. And then she might have felt constrained to utter some unpalatable truths. When I was tedious and commonplace, she would have said bluntly, "You are tedious and commonplace," and the soothing effect of endearing prefixes to one's name, or anything of that sort, would never have occurred to her. Under those circumstances, how dull, how discouraging, my task would have been!

CHAPTER XV.

THE OBSTINATE ANGEL.

THE wearisome summer was over, and the Berges family were back again in their respectable residence on C—— Street. The theatre had opened, the city people flocked back, and concerts, soirées, and parties of all sorts began again. Mr. North accompanied Ophelia everywhere, and their marriage was a common theme, except at home; *there* it was never mentioned.

"My daughter," said Mr. Berges one day at the table (he seldom saw her now except at the table, so solitary and unsocial had become her habits), "when is that wedding of yours to come off? I see no signs as yet of anything unusual going on. And my pocket-book, which I had expected to see pillaged of its last farthing, remains undisturbed."

"Are you in a hurry to get rid of me, papa?" She did not look up as she said this, and her restless fingers performed a lively chime upon her wine-glass.

"You know, Ophelia," returned papa, "that this house will be like a tomb when you have gone out of

it. But there is some one else whose claims are stronger than ours, and who complains loudly of your indifference, and insists upon immediate possession of his rightful property."

The chime upon the glass continued for some time uninterrupted, during which time Mr. and Mrs. Berges observed their daughter attentively.

"I do not expect to live long, to marry any one," she said, at length.

Her audience looked astonished.

"Why, Ophelia!" exclaimed her father. "What makes you think you are going to die? Have you any disease?"

"No; but I feel assured that my life is not to be a long one."

Her father looked at the slight form and pale cheek, and remarked for the first time how fast their little ruddiness and stability were ebbing away, and thought, with alarm, that her words were likely to come true.

"We must have a physician," he said, decidedly.

But Ophelia would have no physician. It was remarkable, the stubbornness this angelic creature could display when her will was opposed. She had no disease: where was the use of medicine? Her constitution was simply failing, and no medicine could restore it. Mrs. Berges scouted the idea, but it took deeper hold upon the mind of her father.

"She shall not be forced into a marriage that is not entirely agreeable to her. Mr. North is a very clever gentleman, no doubt, but I think myself that he is rather cold and selfish. I will speak to him on the subject. He will not want an invalid for a wife, I am sure."

Upon the first opportunity he stated the case to Mr. North. "The fact is, her health is not good at all, and the chances are ten to one that, if you marry her now, you will have an invalid on your hands. The state of the case releases you altogether, and Ophelia

has no desire under the circumstances to hold you to the contract."

If this had occurred in the first of their engagement, no doubt Mr. North would readily have accepted his release, and perhaps with congratulations upon his escape from a bad bargain. But he had become strongly attached to the kind, docile, affectionate girl, who always, except in this instance, consulted his wishes and comfort in preference to her own,—who was patient with his jealousies and fault-finding, and with whom his whole future seemed now irrevocably interwoven. He was a man of settled habits, and liked no sudden changes. He became attached by degrees, and his affections were not to be suddenly detached.

He replied that he was very sorry indeed—and the old gentleman could see that he spoke the truth, and that she must have a physician. He wanted no release; she might suit herself in regard to the time of their marriage; but she must hurry and get well. Her life was too precious to have the least part of it wasted in illness. He would come up and talk to her about it; and so the conference ended.

He came up and "talked to her about it," and looked greatly concerned for her welfare; but nothing was said about dissolving the engagement.

"You won't have any medicine, Ophelia, what *do* you want?" said her father one day, when she had flatly declined taking anything.

"I should like to go to the country and spend a few days with Adele better than anything else," she replied.

"It is growing too chilly to travel in any comfort," said her father, "and I cannot leave just now to go with you. Perhaps North can."

"North! North!" she exclaimed, petulantly. "Am I never to get out of sight or sound of North? You must consider me exceedingly helpless not to be able to go that short distance alone."

She talked so spiritedly about the trip, and seemed to brighten so in anticipation of it, that it was decided she should go, and without "North."

"But *some one* must accompany you to Jonestown, and get you a room—for it will be better for you to stay there all night, instead of making the whole journey in a day, and engage a conveyance to take you the next day out to Hughes's."

Mr. Haddon, a trusty clerk, was the person selected for that important business. Mrs. Berges, upon bidding her "good-by," advised her to bring her lively friend home with her, who she thought possibly could get her out of that stupid notion about dying.

Mr. Haddon performed his part like a well-ordered machine: engaged a room in the big barn of a hotel; had a fire lighted in it; engaged a hack for the next day; put her baggage in charge of the clerk; paid all the bills and set sail for the city, thanking his stars that he lived in no such rusty, antiquated place as Jonestown.

He gave Mr. Berges a minute account of the trip, omitting, however, the trifling fact that Ophelia had fallen in getting out of the cars at Jonestown, and slightly sprained her foot, which had been no fault of *his*.

It furnished an entirely new sensation to Ophelia to find herself entirely alone and disregarded in that strange old hotel. And as she sat in her old-fashioned room and looked through the little clean windows, upon the rustic town, her mind was drawn away from herself and her trials.

Fancy a squad of pensive-looking dwellings, with a "sprinkling" of shops and "stores" mustered together upon a rusty common, and you have the village of Jonestown. The spirit of enterprise gave no disturbing call to its contented inhabitants. An atmosphere of dreamy languor enveloped the whole town; and Ophelia settled herself in her easy chair with a sigh of

content, and, crossing her feet upon the fender, gave herself up to careless reverie.

The wind rattled at the casement, the fire burned cheerily, and Ophelia, always ready to accept any enjoyment which chance threw in her way,—free to wander in thought whither she would, with no one near to remind her of any unpleasant obligation or fetter,—for once yielded to the sweet guidance of her fancy.

At the end of an hour's musing she started suddenly, and a faint tinge of red suffused her cheeks. Whose face had mingled with her dreams? She opened her watch, looked upon the cold, hard countenance portrayed within, and closed it almost immediately, with a sigh. Not *that* one. Her dream ended with a glimpse of it, and she arose immediately and walked restlessly about the room.

"Oh, God, spare me the misery that must follow upon such a union!" was her bitter cry. "And why, *why* was that other thrown upon my path, to show me by contrast with what an unsuited nature I *must* ally my own? Was it not cruel, when there was no escape? Oh, Father, be merciful! send *any* misfortune but that!"

At last she sat down a little composed. Her heart had been aroused for some purpose. She *could* love!—she felt it now. Heavens! how she could love! If he would only come again, and bring back the sunshine to her life,—if but for a brief season,—she could go on her thorny way a little more patiently. If he would only meet her here! She did not care what might happen, if he would only come. Her thoughts had been imprisoned so long, and now that they were unloosed, almost drove her mad with importunate demands for the satisfying of their own desire.

But this wild mood did not continue long. She shut out the twilight and lit the lamp. Then she spread her fashion books, and began to calculate the cost of her trousseau, and to think of Adele, and the old country-

house, and Herve (she liked Herve, and hoped he would be there), and so she conquered her tyrannical rebellious mood, and slept sounder that night than she had for many weeks.

When she awoke in the morning, the chamber-maid was pounding upon the door and calling her to breakfast. She arose drowsily, but upon placing her feet upon the floor, found that the sprained one was nearly twice as large as the other, and that it protested severely against being walked upon. She made her toilette with difficulty and, with one shoe "slip-shod," hobbled toward the dining-room. She reached the steps descending to the first floor, when, finding that she could proceed no farther, she was obliged to sit down and wait for assistance, there being no such thing as a call-bell in the whole house.

Her solitary situation had lost its charm. After a long while a soiled-looking waiter passed. It was no time to be dainty, so Ophelia appealed to him for assistance. One's apparel she discovered to be an unsafe index to the disposition,—inasmuch as the tender, respectful bearing of the uncouth waiter was in marked contrast to his rugged exterior.

As they reached the foot of the steps, several gentlemen emerged from the dining-room and deployed past, glancing curiously at the odd pair. One of them suddenly paused, hesitated a moment,—only a moment,—then sprang forward and snatched her, almost rudely, from the waiter. It was Hal Ripley.

"What has happened? What are you doing here alone? Where was that old cuss taking you?"

Ophelia thanked the waiter kindly before she attempted a reply to his numerous inquiries. Then she explained: she was on her way to Mr. Hughes's; she had sprained her foot; and that old *gentleman* was taking her to the dining-room. She took his arm and went in to breakfast. Although Ophelia felt a little relieved at the sight of some one who knew her, she was

very sorry that it was Hal. If it had only been Kingsley! But nothing ever happens as nice and romantic in real life as it does in books. It was raining too, and it was likely she would have to remain all day. Perhaps, however, Hal might be in a hurry, and would go on.

But no,—Hal was in no hurry, and settled himself comfortably upon the sofa in the old-fashioned parlor, with the air of one who is bent on mischief. Heretofore, when they had met, he had looked moody and sullen, and had tormented her with reproaches and importunate appeals. Now that he found her alone and completely at his mercy, he entertained himself, and excited her, with protestations of love, and familiarities which his manner made an insult.

Throughout that dreadful rainy day she concealed, as best she could, her dislike and her dread of him,—it had come to that,—and tried to be patient. All that night she tossed, nervous and wide awake, until dawn brought a few hours of disturbed slumber. The drizzly morning was far advanced when she awoke to a day as much to be dreaded as the preceding.

"Hal, you must leave here to-day, or *I* will," she said, as she sat by the parlor window, with her tormentor sitting very near. She would have gone to her own room, only Hal declared that he would go too; and she believed him capable of almost anything that would facilitate his own amusement. "The people here observe us rather too curiously. Really, Hal, they begin to look suspicious."

Mr. Ripley's only reply was to smile malevolently and reach over and readjust her scarf lovingly about her shoulders. This in full view of the landlady and a few others, who pretended not to be observing.

"Hal!" said Ophelia, in a peremptory tone, "go and tell the clerk that I wish to see him."

"What for, darling?" was the distinctly audible reply.

"I want him,—that is sufficient. If you won't go, I'll call one of the servants. I am going to leave

here immediately. I regret now that I did not go yesterday."

"In the rain?" he queried, incredulously.

"Yes, in the rain." She beckoned one of the servants to her. "Tell the clerk I wish to see him a few minutes."

In a few moments the clerk stood before her.

"Will you tell the hackman—I believe you have but one here,"—she did not smile, though the clerk *did* rather sourly—"to have his vehicle ready in half an hour? I shall be much obliged to you."

The clerk said "Certainly," glanced at the elegant young gentleman lounging beside her, who reddened slightly under his scrutiny, and, with a profound bow, made his exit.

"You should not go in the rain, Ophelia, however urgent the trip," the disinterested listeners heard the "elegant young gentleman" say. "Your health is too delicate to risk such exposure. However, if you are *determined* to go, I will go with you."

"Hal, you shall *not!*" exclaimed Ophelia, under her breath.

"But I *will!*"

And sure enough, the village gossips saw the gay cavalier hand the pretty young lady into the carriage, place himself beside her, and tenderly wrap the buffalo-robe about her to ward off the rain, for the windows were broken; and as they disappeared from view, *one* gave voice to the thoughts of all. "Rather a singular couple! What are they, I wonder? Lovers, or what?"

Splash! splash! splash! Rain, mud, and chilly winds united to make the ride insufferable. Ophelia sat as quiet as was possible upon such a road, looking straight before her,—never once glancing toward the young gentleman beside her, who leaned back luxuriously, with his feet upon the seat in front, and his arm thrown carelessly upon the back of the one they both occupied. Frequently she was thrown almost into his arms, and always met with some mockingly endearing

epithet, and occasionally a caress; but she gave no more evidence of consciousness than if she had been a dressmaker's figure.

Her features were firmly set, her lips locked in silent endurance; but what a storm was going on within! There were ugly thoughts within the "angel's" mind just then. It were almost wicked to *describe* the fierce hatred and resentment that had possession of her thoughts at that moment. The *rain* was nothing. I fear she would have taken an exquisite pleasure in inflicting some acute pain upon her loving companion just then, the indignant blood surged so savagely through her veins.

But Hal soon wearied of this, and began to apostrophize Ophelia as a "beautiful statue"; but the statue giving no signs of life, he proceeded further in his efforts to warm it into consciousness, and wound his arm about her waist. It was ice and fire, but the ice did not melt: for the fire though fierce was small.

"I wish North could see this," he exclaimed, with a laugh. "Wouldn't it make the old prig swear? You won't talk? Well, then, I'll kiss you. I must entertain myself *some* way. You used to let me kiss you, and I see no difference now."

"Good Heavens! This is *too* much! Let me go, Hal! There,—some one is coming." She burst into tears; but, of course, the sight of them did not touch him.

"You do not look any uglier, Ophelia. I'll swear you look prettier than before."

A horseman approached. He was wrapped in an oil-cloth cloak and his hat was slouched over his eyes. He paused involuntarily, pushed back his hat, and looked fixedly at the two occupants of the carriage. Ophelia's eyes were downcast, her cheeks aflame. Hal nodded insolently, without change of position, and Ophelia looked up. The horseman bowed distantly and hastened on. Both parties had a good look at

each other. There was a startled, affrighted look on Ophelia's face. Ripley laughed.

"Ah, you recognized your *dear* friend? I have not the honor of his acquaintance, but I know him as the dear, devoted friend of my darling."

Yes, it was her "dear friend." How she had longed for a glimpse of that pure, spiritual face, through the dreary weeks that had passed since that memorable evening when it had gone out of her presence so suddenly! Well, she had seen it; she had a vivid picture in her mind of its features, and, more than all, its expression. Now, why not go on your way content, Ophelia?

"You call this *love*, Hal Ripley!" she exclaimed, turning passionately upon him. "The very brutes would be outraged by such treatment. You do not care for me; you care only for yourself. I would rather die, this minute, than marry you!"

The frozen statue at length had melted, but simply enough to extinguish the fire. Hal frowned, bit his lip, and withdrew his arm.

There was not much more said, and Ophelia sat scornful and defiant, Hal stiff and sullen, during the remainder of the drive. "Love!—he would ruin and blight my life if he dared. He would have his pleasure, though it made me an object of misery and scorn. And the world too would call it *love*. Oh, God! is there anything better in this life?"

Adele received her friend with rapture. Mr. Ripley returned immediately, after hoping, in the iciest tone, that Ophelia would have a pleasant visit. She thanked him in the pleasantest tone she had yet used, she was so glad to be rid of him.

For a few days the two friends were quite vivacious and unremitting in conversation; but by that time mere incidents had become scarce, and their chat began to flag; and Adele observed that her friend now and then sank into moods of deep and gloomy reverie, from which she aroused herself with difficulty. She

had only confided to her friend the merest surface of her thoughts. She had not even informed her of her engagement. How should she excuse herself for having entered into it? She felt that Adele could never have been drawn into any such false position.

"Ophelia, you tell me nothing," complained her friend. "While I pour out my whole heart and history to you, you lock your real feelings out of my sight and reach. Have you discovered that I am not the friend you want? I know that my friendship is no particular honor or recommendation to any one; but at least it is sincere, and that you will not find in all."

"I told you what I thought would interest you, Adele. The rest is stupid, and would make even me dull in telling it."

"I see!—I understand! Never mind, then, Ophelia. It makes no difference, and it was impolite in me to mention it." And Adele arose and walked away, lest her friend should feel constrained to reveal what she preferred to preserve secret.

"Come back, Adele. I will tell you all, if I can." She drew her hand slowly over her features, as if to arrange them for the ordeal.

"No, no, Ophelia; I will not listen. It was very wrong,—I see it now,—to drive you into a confession which you could not make voluntarily."

Ophelia felt that a crisis had arrived in their friendship, when it was necessary that her friend should know what was transpiring in her mind; and yet how she shrank from a revelation!

"Adele," she said, in that mild, firm tone to which the impetuous nature always yielded. "I am going to tell you the whole truth of my heart. If you care to hear it, stay; if not, I shall be sorry, for in this instance I deserve pity, not resentment. I could accept it from no one but you; and that is all the recital will excite in your mind."

Adele resumed her chair in silence.

"You give me no encouragement! You look stern and cold! Heavens! how hard it is to bare one's heart to the scrutiny of human eyes, however kindly!"

Once more she passed her hand over her face, and some of its apathy seemed to pass away,—her eyes filled with tears. That was enough for Adele. "I am a very fiend to drive you to this! But tell me: I can help you to bear it, if it must be borne. See how strong I am. *Nothing* hurts *me*."

There! that is like you, Adele," said Ophelia, cheerfully, wiping her eyes. (How quickly sympathy dries our tears!) And then she began at the beginning: her reluctant betrothal; her growing dislike to Mr. North; and finally her hatred of his disposition and character, as a closer association revealed it to her; his greed for riches; his oppression of the poor; his tyranny over those beneath him; and, worse than all, a corrupt private life. She made no attempt to excuse her own weakness, for Ophelia began at length to see her own faultiness. And now Adele saw her falter and shrink, and she knew that the hardest part of her confession was yet to come. Her breath came shorter, and a flame flashed into her cheek, as she began to tell of the "young Southerner," the "son of her father's friend;" but she persevered in her recital, even to that last glimpse of him through the carriage window.

When she had concluded, Adele arose as if to address an audience. "*No one* should make a martyr of herself, to please any human being! Married to Mr. North! I would as soon see you dead. You shall not marry him, if I can prevent it by fair means or foul!"

"Your interference can do no good, Adele. It would only make matters worse. There is no help for me. I have been wicked, and it is but just that I should suffer. It is said that our strength is always equal to every requirement; but I do not believe it! I believe thousands sink under burdens too great for their strength. Don't look so troubled. All will be well some day."

She had not only sold her birthright, but had ignorantly defrauded herself of the blessing. Now, there was nothing better to be done than to content herself, as best she could, with her tasteless mess of pottage. But Adele was not so resigned, and made dire threats of what she would do in her friend's behalf.

I am conscious, John, that my heroine, at the present stage of her affairs, cuts a sorry figure. But an inexorable conscientiousness urges me into a confession of the truth at all hazards. Women, though as a general thing much more sensible than men, are occasionally as great idiots.

I believe it is the general habit of feminine writers to assign the whole business of love to men. The heroine generally figures as a guileless, unsuspecting, helpless victim, seeking desperately to escape the toils of a whole mob of lovers. Every lady whom I have ever known to be surrounded by lovers had somewhat to do with the collection herself.

"Love, in some sort, is essential to woman," says the crafty courtier St. Evremond, the life-long friend and lover of Ninon de L'Enclos. "If you cannot storm the citadel of a woman's affections, at least make yourself master of the bastion of her intellect. Love, love, love! their hearts are never free from it."

But, wise as he thought himself, St. Evremond did not know everything, and afterward was constrained to confess that he had occasionally met women endowed with all affection and tenderness, unaccompanied by love.

CHAPTER XVI.

THAT MISS HUGHES AGAIN.

"AND so that Miss Hughes is back again!" exclaimed Miss Fischer, as she leveled her opera-glass at the object of her remark. "And in one of Ophelia's dresses, I'll vow! As vain and conceited as ever I perceive; just look, will you, how coolly she surveys the audience! as if she had been accustomed to nothing else; and I'll bet anything she never even *heard* of an opera before last winter."

Mr. Ripley followed the direction of his companion's opera-glass; but he looked at Ophelia, who, in a regal toilette, sat cold and silent at the side of her dignified *fiancé*, looking about with keen, questioning eyes, at everybody and everything; now and then nodding to an acquaintance, but never smiling.

"I never liked Miss Hughes," returned Hal, "and I think she exerts a very bad influence over Ophelia. I can see a great change in Ophelia's disposition since she first came. She is a very handsome young lady, but for all that, I fear Miss Hughes has set her heart upon a prize which she will never obtain."

"You mean Sid Waltman?" said Miss Fischer, smiling (instead of slapping his face, as the creature deserved).

"Sid will never wed a *poor* girl: he likes his ease too well for that; and Sid is ambitious. All that time spent at Long Branch last summer was not wasted in pursuit of that Nevada heiress, as was supposed. He was studying and wire-working for his *political* advancement. And, already, Sid Waltman is considered a rising man."

"Did he really address that Nevada girl?" inquired Miss Fischer, with a pretty toss of her haughty head.

"Certainly," returned Ripley. "Sid related the whole story at the club, and threw the boys into convulsions with his comic imitations of his charmer."

"The rascal!" exclaimed Miss Fischer, coloring slightly. "I suppose you members of gay clubs make it a matter of course to tell everything a lady says to you, upon such occasions."

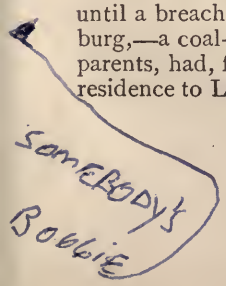
"Yes," returned Ripley; "only, when we are in dead earnest, then we tell nothing."

"I wonder if Sid tells what Miss Hughes says to him?" said Miss Fischer, musingly.

"He has made a few boasts in that direction," returned Hal, and then discreetly changed the subject.

Sid was with Miss Hughes to-night, and almost every other night. He seemed to have forgotten his uncle's advice and his own resolutions. Her beauty and her wit made her a power not to be disregarded in the circle where she had been received as an interloper. Her toilette, though simple, was artistic, and no one ever cared whether the material was inexpensive or costly. Adele was not only gay this season, she was happy; and every one knows that happiness, if not locked within a stingy, narrow heart, is contagious. Adele was generous with her superabundance of content, and distributed it at random. She would listen as earnestly to the neglected old lady in the corner, relating the gay doings of *her* day, as to the traveled celebrity, telling of miraculous adventures in foreign lands.

Without doubt, Sid was deeply in love, and their marriage began to be talked of as a sure thing. Everything seemed to be going on swimmingly. The course of true love was like a race-track,—so smooth was it,—until a breach was made by a pretty heiress from Pittsburg,—a coal-merchant's *only* daughter, who, with her parents, had, for some reason or other, transferred their residence to L[illegible].



Viola Ball was a "beauty." That is, she had a pretty, childish face, a pink-and-white complexion, and the most innocent blue eyes in the world, and such sweet simplicity of manner!

She stepped right into the hearts of all the marriageable young gentlemen of L——, and created a "stir" generally. Sid had been too accustomed to leading in the train of the reigning belle of the hour, not to be swerved from his present divinity. So he danced and chatted quite as much as any with the new star.

"Such a nice, adaptable creature!" he thought. "One could twirl her around his little finger; and that is the sort of wife for an ambitious man to have, who wants none of your sharp women with a thousand eyes, prying into his affairs. And how she would love a fellow and give up to him! It would be the easiest thing in the world, managing the little goose."

Gradually he forsook Adele,— not *for good;* even if he married the pretty coal-merchant's daughter (and having examined into the coal-merchant's affairs and found them substantial, Sid was not long in making up his mind on *that* point), he could smooth it all over with Adele, and go on the same as before, loving her and letting her love him. Of course there were plenty of ill-natured people who were happy to witness Adele's decline in Sid's affections,—people who had prophesied it, and people who had envied her, simply because envy was the natural and spontaneous product of their little hearts. Only there was one drawback to their enjoyment,—Adele's continued happiness and gayety. She received more attention than ever, and never before had she been so recklessly gay.

"How do you like the coal-merchant's daughter, Sid?" inquired a lady one evening, in Adele's hearing.

"You will excuse me, Mrs. Harper, if I decline to express my opinion of the coal-merchant's daughter until I have satisfactory proof of what the coal merchant's daughter thinks of me," was the discreet reply.

"She is very lovely!" sighed an admirer, who "followed" afar off.

"And *so* tender-hearted!" said another. "You should have seen her crying as if her heart would break, over the misfortunes of Enoch Arden; and then how prettily she blushed and put up her fan when she found some dozen opera-glasses leveled at her!"

Mrs. Harper laughed softly. She was reminded of another scene that had occurred upon that same evening, which she had chanced to witness,—Viola boxing her maid's ears and spitefully tearing down her hair because some unimportant arrangement displeased her. And she knew the poor creature was half dead with the headache too. How were these unsophisticated youths to know that *all* of the coal-merchant's daughter's attractiveness lay immediately upon the surface, when that young lady did not know it herself, but firmly believed herself as near fitted to dwell with the angels as any human being in existence? Viola was very lenient in her judgment of herself. Her good deeds, conspicuous from their very scarcity, she treasured everlastingly in her memory, and impressed indelibly upon the memories of those about her by continual reminders, while her evil ones she immediately forgot and forgave. That was Viola Ball, about whom the young gentlemen of L—— raved as "an angel," "paragon," etc., and whom any one of them would have considered himself infinitely blessed in procuring in marriage.

Although in public Sid gave his attention only to the coal-merchant's daughter, he continued his calls and evening strolls with Adele. I do not know how he managed to keep in her good graces, but there was much dissembling I have no doubt.

The attributes of a cat are always applied to woman, and I do not think it fair. There are masculine as well as feminine cats; and the manner in which this smooth, sleek gentleman toyed with his victim, only exhibiting the claws concealed beneath the velvet-like

paws when the poor thing made an attempt to escape, was exceedingly feline.

And did the willful, high-spirited Adele submit to this tyranny? The willful, high-spirited Adele could not help herself. Alone, she stamped her feet and set her teeth in impotent rage. "Fool! idiot!" she exclaimed, apostrophizing her own miserable self. "He plays with your heart as a sultan plays with the slaves of his harem! He tortures you with alternate tenderness and neglect, simply for his own amusement. I *will* not submit to it! False, perfidious, base,—how can I love him? and yet I do, I do!"

If Adele's pride was not strong enough to conquer her love, at least it was strong enough to keep it concealed. And in very desperation she flirted with every tender young exquisite who came in her way; never reflecting that they, too, had hearts which, however small, were capable of suffering, and that with smaller powers of endurance.

About this time a very romantic stranger made his *début* upon the upper-crust of L—— society. He came from the South, it was said, and his aristocratic appearance, and the air of mystery which hung around the son of a despoiled planter, made a heavy impression upon all the disengaged feminine hearts of that city. This desperate state of affairs was not of long duration, however. As soon as they discovered him as indifferent to their charms in *reality*, as he *appeared*, they speedily lost all interest in him, and Mr. Kingsley had the good fortune to get rid of his popularity almost as soon as it begun.

Between this stranger and Adele a mutual and spontaneous liking had sprung up, upon their very first meeting. He seemed deeply impressed, and Adele, if appearances went for anything, was never so well satisfied as when in his society. Sid watched their growing intimacy covertly and with concealed uneasiness. At length he began to show a disposition to return to his

old allegiance, which Adele completely ignored. She was always "engaged" when he called, and whenever they chanced to meet received his conciliatory advances with an ironical readiness that suppressed sentiment on the instant.

"Sid's reign is absolutely over," said every one.

"This is the constancy of woman!" sneered Sid, *sotto voce.*

One evening, at an entertainment given by one of the clubs which are so numerous in L——, she came and sat down near Sid, who was standing rather moodily against the wall, dismissing her attendant under the plea of being "tired." It may be that the intensity of Sid's disapproving gaze attracted her attention, or it may be that she knew by instinct that he was observing her; at any rate, she turned unexpectedly and, catching his eye, nodded familiarly, and with a smile that said plainly, "You may come if you wish."

Sid hesitated only a moment, then he went and sat down by her, preserving his dignified, disapproving air. He left the opening of the conversation to her, which she made in a piquant, animated, genial manner that was hard to resist. Gradually Sid's frown and injured air vanished. And when she looked into his clouded face, smiling as only Adele *could* smile, he was bewildered. That bewitching smile intoxicated him like wine. They talked animatedly for an hour, then they waltzed and schottisched for another hour.

The old power was reinstated. Sid, reckless of the consequences, if he might only bring Adele back to the old allegiance, and for the first time in his life carried away by the passion of the moment, let the world see that *this* was the woman whom he adored. Mr. Kingsley looked on with a cynical smile. For all he looked so undiscomfited, he was jealous, no doubt, for he stood alone, closely observing them, and talked to no one.

Adele's manner was the same as usual; the same

ease and absence of anything like triumph or display characterized her actions. And yet Sid saw a difference that was not apparent to other eyes. "She loves me!" "she loves me!" was the refrain of all his thoughts. If revenge had been her object, she had obtained her desire, for the pretty little coal-merchant's daughter looked on with an expression of wretchedness which she had not the power to conceal. She had boasted and triumphed over Adele in the victory she supposed herself to have obtained over her rival, but which her rival's more lady-like manner had never accepted. It is probable that Adele's manœuvre to-night meant revenge, yet she did not dislike the silly little creature: she pitied her too much for that; and when she saw her wandering restlessly about, with a feverish anxiety in her pretty blue eyes, which not even the flattery of other admirers could allay, she regretted that she had made the poor little one wretched; and so, with another manœuvre, unperceived by Sid, she recalled Kingsley to her side, and he was left to dispose of himself according to his pleasure.

As Adele, hooded and cloaked, passed down the hall with Kingsley, Sid passed them with his *fiancée* on his arm. They were talking in low tones, but the petulant exclamation, "I won't *have* it!" which was distinctly audible, sounded the key-note to their chat.

"A lovers' quarrel, it seems," remarked Kingsley, with a laugh.

Adele gave no evidence of having heard the remark. Already the reaction, which is almost sure to follow upon undue excitement in such temperaments as hers, had begun. Suddenly she roused herself however, and turning upon her companion a careless glance, inquired, "Hadn't you and Ophelia met previous to your coming here?—I mean, before this winter?"

"Oh, yes," replied Mr. Kingsley, returning her careless glance; "we spent two or three weeks together at Crab Orchard last summer."

"I just happened, at the moment, to think of it; I don't know why; I had a vague fancy that you had met before. Ophelia has seen so much, and met so many people, she never thinks of telling me about her acquaintances, unless I ask her."

"Your friend is a very interesting young lady," said Kingsley.

"My friend does not reveal how interesting she is, in so short a time as two or three weeks."

"Nevertheless, I have a tolerable idea of the sort of young lady she is," returned Kingsley, with a slight smile."

"Well, let us hear how good a reader of human nature you are?" said Adele, incredulously.

"The *superficial* idea of your friend is, that she is of a calm, serene temperament; my version of her is, that she is restless, full of moods and tenses; wayward, fitful, and uncertain."

He looked into Adele's eyes for confirmation, and finding it there, continued: "Instead of being the well-regulated, conventional young lady that she appears in society, Miss Berges is, at heart, a true savage, and rates her own individual freedom above everything else. She has a natural aversion to fetters, and for all the deceptive face seems to aver 'there is no joy but calm,' the quiet of an uneventful, domestic life would be about as congenial to her as a tomb."

"I must say that you judge her better than I had thought; more correctly than she is commonly judged," said Adele, with some surprise.

"Ah!" iterated Kingsley in a peculiar tone.

Adele looked at him earnestly a moment, then started suddenly, a new expression of interest coming into her face: "I wonder——" and then she stopped.

"What do you wonder?" he said, looking at her curiously.

"If the carriage is waiting," was the uninteresting conclusion.

The carriage was waiting, with Ophelia in it, and Mr. North standing by it, holding the door open for Adele. Mr. Kingsley assisted her in, North closed the door, and the carriage drove off.

"I did not know that you and Kingsley were acquainted before, Ophelia, until he told me to-night," said Adele, when they were in their own room.

"Well?" said Ophelia, inquiringly.

"He only told me that you had met at Crab Orchard. I wonder you are not better friends. You never told me anything about it."

"I will tell you some other time," returned Ophelia, rather hastily. "It is late. The fact is, there is not much to tell." And she immediately diverted Adele's attention to another subject.

Upon the following morning, as Ophelia made preparations for attending a mission society of which she was corresponding secretary, or something of the sort, Adele occupied herself with watching the stream of physiognomies which drifted past. She looked languid and dejected. "Ye heavenly powers! for what was this world created?" she at length exclaimed, turning away from the window with a countenance full of disgust. "Selfishness, greed, vanity, vulgarity, or gross stupidity! *Why* do these creatures live and flourish in thy sight?"

"The wise Creator has not seen fit to cast all in the same noble mould, Adele; but they are all his creatures, nevertheless. Some vessels are created to honor, some to dishonor, you know. That he has seen fit to create us of finer clay is no merit of ours. We are all of like value to him, as the product of his almighty hand."

Adele accepted the reproof in silence.

"You look lonely, Adele," said Ophelia, when she was at length ready to go. "Should you like me to stay?"

"Oh, no, Ophelia; go! I prefer you should go."

"But you look unhappy, and it is not necessary that

I should go. I shall not, unless you would rather be without me."

"Well, Ophelia, I believe I *had.* I am so wretched and miserable this morning, and I do not wish to impart any of my discontent to you. I would rather you would go, indeed, Ophelia. What!—tears? Would rather stay and be unhappy with your friend, than sew for the heathen? Then stay and help me, if you can, Ophelia, for I believe my burden is greater than I can bear."

The haughty head was drooped, the proud spirit was crushed,—she looked utterly conquered. Ophelia took off her wrappings, and sat down by her friend in silence. Caresses and condolences she felt would come amiss here; and so she waited for the cloud to pass off in silence. Presently Adele lifted her head proudly, and taking off the costly antique ring which she had worn up to this time, dashed it across the room.

"There!" exclaimed Ophelia, "I like that. It is the wisest thing you have done for some time. I advise you, keep to that spirit."

A frown gathered on the handsome face. "I wish he would die!" she exclaimed, vehemently, "then I could have some peace."

"Adele, that is wicked."

"I do not care! Oh, how I hate and despise myself for being his dupe! Do you know, Ophelia, that whenever he tells me he loves me, I believe him?—against my will, against my judgment. I do not know in the least why I love him so; I cannot understand it at all. I have no knowledge of how it was brought about, or of how it might all be undone. I *know* him to be false. I believe the time will come when I will thank my stars that it is Viola Ball instead of me he marries; and yet that does not make it easier for me."

"Adele! I thought you were strong!"

"Oh, no! I was mistaken: I am weak. But I *will* conquer. I *must*, or my life is not worth a dead leaf!"

She arose and walked restlessly about the room, the picture of wild despair. Unconsciously Ophelia, as she watched her friend, was lifting her thoughts to Heaven in earnest prayer. "Keep me, oh, Almighty Preserver, close to thy heart,—thy great life-giving heart,—that I may find thy love all-sufficing, and never, never go wandering after idols of this earth."

She saw the fruits of intemperate earthly love in the miserable creature before her, who, whichever way she turned, could find no attitude of mind that did not bring her pain. Her life seemed suddenly stripped of every hope,—nothing left her but the power of suffering. Is it not mysterious, this soul of ours? It is nothing that we can *see*, or recognize by any material power of perception. Intangible as air, imperceptible to every sense, there is no material method by which we can conceive of its existence; and yet the torture it is capable of enduring! The sufferings of the body are not to be compared with it! When the *soul* is wounded, then there is anguish, such as flesh and blood cannot conceive.

"I was not created for a domestic life," she said, at length, sitting down again by the window. There was no alternative but to accept the situation and make the best of it; and like a wise girl she began to make it as endurable as possible. "My nature is too intense for the dull routine of household duties. I think it likely I would soon weary of it, and wish myself free again."

"Oh, you do not know, Adele," said her friend; "so persuasive is home love,—so comforting, so restful. When this stormy mood is past, you will turn all the more eagerly to a quiet fireside and a settled life. I will see you a happy householder yet."

As she spoke there was a tap at the door, and the maid handed in the morning's mail. There was nothing but Sid's wedding-cards.

"Thursday!" exclaimed Ophelia. "It is sooner than

I expected. At the church. What shall you wear, Adele?"

"I shall not go," said Adele. She leaned her head against the window, and looked quietly out upon the street. But there were heavy shadows about the splendid eyes, and painful lines about the perfect mouth.

"You *must*, Adele! What would people think?"

"Do you suppose I care for what people think? I could *not* endure it. I should faint, perhaps, and make a scene. You cannot conceive, Ophelia, the desperate state of my mind."

"Tell me, then," said Ophelia, compassionately; "it would relieve you, I know, and I shall be glad to share your thoughts, however desperate they may be."

"No, it would be no relief. Let the fires die in silence: that is best. If I only had some chance of working off this mood! If I might only be an actress!"

"You wild, reckless creature! That is not to be thought of."

"It is my only talent. And I have been told that I have peculiarities in appearance, voice, and action, of Mrs. Siddons and of Charlotte Cushman. I should *enjoy* Lady Macbeth's career. I feel her thirst for power, her——"

"Hush, Adele!" exclaimed Ophelia, shuddering. "I do not like to hear you talk so. Why not *write?* You have a brilliant and a ready pen."

"I could not. My mind is in no condition to write articles. I could not abstract my thoughts from my own troubles. Once, when life seemed a vista of pleasures, with a few fancy shadows cast in by way of variety, my mind was full of happy thoughts. A certain serenity of mind is necessary to success in any branch of art. I could never make capital of my own experiences, for the entertainment of the public."

"That would be both unnecessary and uncalled for. A strong sympathetic power is one of the essentials of genius—genial, you know,—*loving*. An author por-

trays more correctly those emotions, thoughts and passions of which he is the mere spectator: understood through sympathy, he has a more collected view, and is wholly unprejudiced."

"I have no wish to spend my life for the good of an ungrateful public. Fame comes only after one is dead, and what do I care what people say of me after I am dead? Sometimes, indeed, an author—if he chooses to live half a century—receives a small allowance of praise, which is so mixed up with spite and envy that it is of little comfort to him. If I ever submit myself to the criticism of that conglomeration of insects and reptiles called 'the public,'—who vote you a fool if they haven't the brains to understand you,—it will be in some capacity wherein I may gain immediate and sure profit. I would rather rely upon my heels, my voice, or this superb face of mine,—about which some fools rave,—for fame, than upon my brains. Mere intellect is a possession of very low value in the estimation of most people."

"If that is your feeling toward the public, I own you would not be likely to accomplish much good. You take a handful of critics,—some honest and impartial, others eager only for their own aggrandizement, which is accomplished so much more easily by *destroying* other people's work than by creations of their own,—and call that the public! when there are thousands who read your book and like it, of whom you never hear."

"If you never hear of them, what good does it do?" said Adele.

"Oh, if you count only the good that accrues to *yourself*, that is another matter;" and Ophelia turned away disappointed.

"I have told you, Ophelia, I have not the power of looking outward from myself as you have; of identifying myself with the world and working for it and being satisfied if *it* is benefited, regardless of my own comfort."

"Conquer yourself—rise above yourself—and you can."

Adele made no reply, but looked gloomily out upon the street. She was in no mood to be philanthropic. Storm-tossed, this wayward spirit had no compass, no anchor—no help or guide. She knew nothing of the tenderness and compassion of the Divine One; how, when all earthly friends fail, He—the King of Kings—is not disdainful of the slighted, wounded heart, but heals and comforts it, and makes it stronger than before.

I have no craving for political power, John, but I would fain whisper a word in the ear of Congress, in behalf of the struggling literati of our land. Oh, that I could see this sordid, practical, calculating age pass away, to be succeeded by a golden one of letters, when *brains* shall take the precedence of money—when the poets and philosophers shall be the aristocrats of the land, instead of the wealthy railroad speculators and oil-merchants! I would have the savants (and savanesses) flourishing gorgeous badges, and sonorous titles in the dead—*stone*-dead—languages, while the rest of the world stood agape with awe at their magnificence. They should dwell in glorious alhambras instead of garrets, and feast upon ambrosia instead of crusts.

But alas! as I glance around and perceive no "hall of legislation,"—nor one single M. C. to whose listening ear I might unfold my plans—I am forced to relinquish my dream of a "Golden Age."

CHAPTER XVII.

"LASHINGS,"—BUT NOT OF "CONSCIENCE."

HERVE had completed his last course of lectures; had studied hard and matriculated with honor. He had not visited his sister and her friend often,—being too much engrossed in his studies,—and *never* attended parties. Ophelia liked for Herve to come. She perceived in him a rare sincerity and earnestness, and she wanted to search thoroughly and to the uttermost this admirable character. She felt that contact with so decidedly honest and truthful a nature was of benefit to her. She would spare him the annoyance of useless gallantries, but she was resolved upon having him for a friend,—a *fast, true* friend. Therefore she was no less gratified than Adele when he informed them that an old and prominent physician had taken him into his office and practice as prospective partner.

As they all talked the matter over one evening in the parlor, Mr. Waltman made his appearance, unannounced. Ophelia went forward rather hastily to meet him and conducted him to a divan at some distance from the brother and sister. Both bowed distantly, and continued their conversation as if uninterrupted.

"Your friend is to be married to Mr. North soon, I believe," remarked Herve.

"Yes, that is the present calculation," returned Adele.

"She is not very anxious for the marriage?"

"No," said Adele discontentedly, "I believe she despises him."

"Is it for his wealth?"

"Wealth! no, she cares nothing for wealth. It is simply because her parents wish it."

"Why don't you use your influence with her against it?" said Herve, earnestly. "She should not be allowed to sacrifice herself in that way."

"I *have* used my influence, and it is of no use. She is as stubborn as a rock."

"She is too good for him,—a thousand times!—I am sure. I know something of his private life, and it is not altogether above reproach."

Sid had prevailed upon Ophelia to play for him, and stood leaning upon the piano, watching her fingers. When the brother and sister approached, he turned and spoke to Adele. "I have something of yours that I want to give you this evening," he said.

"And receive something of yours in return?" she replied, with a satirical arch of her peculiar eyebrows.

"No, no," returned Sid. "I hope you will return nothing—come to the window,—and there is one little keepsake that I would like to retain." They walked to the bay-window at the farther end of the room, talking lightly and smiling serenely. The handsome lace curtains screened them partially from the other occupants of the room as they sat down together within the recess.

"Here," he said, handing her a little note, the only love-note she had ever written him. "I wanted to keep it, but I thought you would feel more comfortable to have it back."

"Thank you," said Adele, taking the antique ring from her pocket and handing him. He would not receive it, so she quietly laid it on the sill, where it was afterward found by the maid and quietly appropriated to her own use.

He had a long defense made up for the occasion, but, looking into those clear eyes, he found it impossible to repeat it. However strong the will of man, it can be conquered by the influence of woman. History has a thousand times repeated this aphorism, and Sid, in her presence, felt himself over-mastered.

"My soul! my life!" he exclaimed softly,—more as if he were speaking to himself,—looking down into her face with such a splendor of passion in his handsome eyes that Adele was fairly dazzled.

She turned away hastily, but he held her fast. "I have been possessed by a demon, who spoiled my nights and my days of rest, and blinded me to every thought but one,—that one, to make myself famous. I was a fool! What is fame, when we grasp it, but air! It is *love* only that blesses." And then he poured forth such a wild torrent of tender words and mad entreaties,—"he would defy the world and give up *everything* if she would go with him!—they would be married immediately, and go away, he cared not *where!*—he could make his way in the world *any place* if she were with him,"—that Adele, struck dumb by this sudden blaze of passion, gazed at him in a sort of trance of uncontrolable tenderness and wonder. At *last* she was beloved with that fiery, insane sort of passion which alone could satisfy the demands of her exacting nature. No wonder that she drooped and trembled as a slender reed before the blast.

She did not forget that there were others in the room; a woman never forgets that, unless she be mad indeed. "You talk nonsense!" she said, a little scornfully. "Your rather singular proposal comes a little *late.*"

"I see! You do not believe me; you have no faith in me. Well, I deserve that. Look at me, Adele, just one moment, and you will know that I speak from the heart."

She shrank away from him. "Bah!" she exclaimed, scornfully; "there is no truth in you! Once I was such an idiot as to bestow myself at your asking. You slighted the gift and scorned it. Now, Sid Waltman, I *hate* and despise you."

She turned away and walked deliberately to the piano, where Ophelia and Herve were occupied in trying some

new ballads together. Sid, quivering from the shock of his sudden downfall, for a moment stood gazing stupidly into the street. He felt the jar all over him. By a strong effort of will he mastered himself, and was quietly making his way towards the door when Mr. Hughes called out:

"Wait a moment, Mr. Waltman; I'll go with you."

Adele sat down by the window and watched the two go up the street together. "Go to bed, Ophelia; I'll be up presently."

"I'll stay until you are ready, then," returned Ophelia.

"Oh, no!—there's no use! I only want to see my star go down."

"Well, come up soon, or I'll be asleep."

"Yes," returned Adele; and her friend went away yawning.

She stretched her head out at the window to look for the two figures, but they were out of sight. There was hatred between them, she knew. In a few moments more she stood at the gate looking up and down the street. It was deserted. A respectable street it was, and had no need of police, only to keep burglars away.

Far, far up the street she discerned two dim figures which were so far away, she knew. Throwing a veil over her head, she followed quickly. Near enough to discern their gestures and hear their voices, she paused in the shadow of a broad-spreading tree to listen.

"You have acted the part of a scoundrel and a villain! You have shown yourself too mean and contemptible for the touch of honest hands, but I intend to honor you above your deserts and give you a genteel thrashing."

Waltman looked at the speaker with ineffable scorn. "The fool!" he exclaimed, as if addressing some other person, "as if I would consent to fight like a rowdy in the open street!"

"I know of no more suitable place," said Herve,

taking him by the collar. "I have a mind to shake the very soul out of you!—the villainous, contemptible soul," he said, shaking him.

Sid's swarthy countenance became livid. "Sir," he said, with outward composure, "I have nothing against you. I consider you as generally a well-meaning fellow, and should really dislike to do you any serious damage, but if you do not release me, I shall be compelled to —box your jaws. You will not? Then——." A heavy blow followed, which, taking his stout antagonist on surprise, came near bringing him to the ground.

But the sturdy Hercules soon recovered his balance, and the next instant the two closed upon each other. A tough struggle followed. It had lasted but a few minutes, when both tottered a moment,—then fell; but Sid was beneath, and Herve's hand was on his throat. His face grew black,—his veins knotted up like cords, —his hold slackened,—his arms fell apart.

Adele hesitated no longer. "Herve, you fool!—do you want to be hung? Let him go, I tell you! *He's dead now!*"

She forced these words through her set teeth,—close-locked, to keep back the hysterical shrieks she felt rising to her lips.

Herve's hold loosened, but the breath was out of him. For a minute he was still,—still as a rock. Then he drew a long breath, the deadly hue passed off from his countenance, and he sat up.

He looked up at the two standing over him, drew his hand over his face, and said, "I will get over this presently."

Then his eye rested on Herve,—a deadly glare!—and he arose to his feet. But Herve's sister was before him, her hand upon his arm, and a look of entreaty mingled with command in her eye.

"Mr. Waltman," she said, in low, steady tones, "my brother has been very rash, but you ought to be able to forgive him. You *ought*,—remembering all that has

transpired this night. Let this be the last of it,—the *very last!* Will you let me ask this in vain?"

He looked down upon her, and slowly a change came over his countenance. "No," he said shortly, turning away. "Oh, that it could be blotted out,—or that it had never been!"

Footsteps were heard approaching. A solitary figure was seen advancing toward them. It was a policeman. He strolled slowly by, looking keenly at the party. Herve took his sister's arm and turned toward home.

They did not speak until they had reached the gate. There they paused. "Foolish, foolish Herve!" said Adele, looking kindly at him. "You did very wrong. It is better for blundering brothers not to meddle in such matters. To-morrow evening Mr. Waltman is to be married, after which he starts on a long tour. Everything has long been over between us. He only came to-night to bid me good-bye."

"Very well, I have prepared him for his bridal," said Herve, with a short laugh.

"I must go," said Adele; "Ophelia might be coming to look for me."

"Does she know anything of this?"

"No."

"Then tell her nothing. I am sorry that you should know. Good-night."

"Good-night."

Upon the following evening a large and fashionable audience were assembled in one of the largest and most popular churches in L——, to witness the marriage ceremony of Sid Waltman and Viola Ball. The bridal party came in to the sound of gay music. The chandeliers flared, the organ groaned, and the minister stood in his robe ready to perform the solemn rite. The bride, in her white satin robe and orange wreath, tripped daintily beside her grave bridegroom, entirely happy in the consciousness of looking beautiful.

I wonder did any one observe that dark, purplish spot upon the bridegroom's throat?—the print of a man's hand. Beneath the chill reserve of his *set* countenance there was a subtle expression, like fear, as if the horror of the step he was now taking rose up, for the first time, and confronted him. They went through with the ceremony composedly, said all that was required of them in a respectful tone, and then back to the vestibule, where they were complimented and congratulated by a few friends; then into the carriage and away.

"I wonder why Miss Berges and Miss Hughes were not here?" said some one to Mr. Beckworth, as they stood at the church gate, looking after the bridal party.

"I do not know," he returned shortly, and was turning away.

"There they are now! Let's call them here and inquire," said the other.

The two young ladies nodded from the carriage window, and the driver pulled up in front of the church.

"Too late!" exclaimed Mr. Beckworth; "they are married and gone."

"We were not going to the wedding," said Ophelia; "we are on our way to the opera house to see Janauschek." Mr. North was with them.

"Can I go along?" inquired Mr. Beckworth.

"Certainly," said all; and Mr. Beckworth got in.

"Why were you not at the wedding, Miss Hughes?" inquired the other gentleman.

"Oh, church weddings are so much like funerals," returned Adele, "they always give me the horrors."

"How's your heart?" called out another.

"Considerably damaged, I own, but I mean to try and plaster it up after a sort," said Adele quite readily. And they drove off.

In society, Adele was more recklessly gay than ever; but when there was nothing to divert and absorb her

attention she was forced to listen to the restless ever-surging thoughts within. Her heart was sorely wounded. She felt bereaved. Often, in the midnight, she awoke with the feeling that some heavy calamity had befallen her.

She could not choose but love him, and now she wanted to steal away to some lonely spot and die. There was no solitude in the city: no darkness, no silence. If she pined for a moment's seclusion and obscurity, the four narrow walls of a room, alone, could give it her. Wander however far upon the rusty confines of the city, there was always a chance of meeting curious, observant eyes.

"I must go home," she said, at length; and, notwithstanding remonstrances and earnest entreaties from the family, she packed her trunk and departed.

Her reception at home was not invigorating. Her father and the boys seemed glad to see her, but her mother, though curious in regard to her city life, was reproachful and disapproving, and her sisters sternly oblivious of her presence. All her overtures of friendship toward these two "superior young women" were received with cold indifference. She tried to conciliate their good-will by every means in her power. She even humbled her pride, for the first time in her life; tried to adopt their habits and tastes, and *pressed* her services upon them;—and at last, finding herself only tolerated, was obliged to fall back upon her own resources for comfort and sympathy.

Here she had solitude—illimitable! Her hungry heart must feed upon itself, or starve. She grew morose and morbid. If her heart had been strong and full of joy and hope, she *might* have accomplished the herculean task of assimilating these discordant elements, and succeeded in establishing an electric, invigorating current of sympathy in this lifeless family circle; but her soul was sick, and sought only for the means wherewith to comfort and heal itself.

"What a beastly way to live!" she thought, with disgust. "We go about with our minds locked up from each other, as if we were dumb animals."

Her father was rarely in the house, and then he read his papers or scolded the boys. "Children are a source of great care and anxiety to their parents," he said, "and rarely any comfort."

Tom had married, and permanently settled in St. Louis. The lady, whom he described as "wealthy, witty, and beautiful," was the daughter of his employer and proprietor of the gorgeous saloon, the description of which answered well to the picture of a faro bank.

When the first note of the robin had heralded the spring, Adele spent an hour each day at twilight walking back and forth in the old orchard, where she battled stoutly with her mutinous heart, and strove to reconcile herself to her joyless fate; though at times she recoiled from the dull, blank future which confronted her.

All around her the bare branches of jagged trees outlined their forms upon the sky. Here she seemed shut in from all the world by a continuous wall of interlacing boughs.

"Oh! the insatiable past!" she exclaimed, thinking of "the days that are no more." "It swallows up all that is most precious in this life; and the mocking future!—it holds forth joys which vanish as we clutch them. Only in the present can we rely, or find substantial comfort."

The sun was setting in great pomp. She looked upon the wall of crimson and gold in the west with a vague feeling of hope that something of brightness was yet to come into her life. As she looked, a dark cloud skirting the horizon slowly rose, like a screen drawn up from some unknown depth, and closed over the tinseled spot, leaving nothing but gloom.

She turned her back upon it, and walked sullenly the

other way. If her life was to be like that, she did not wish to know it. And then, in a sudden fit of morbid despair it seemed to her that life, from the beginning to the ending, was nothing but darkness, and she cried out that the gloomy farce might be speedily ended.

How hard are these fantastic troubles to conquer!

When she turned again and directed her gaze toward the sky, behold a wonderful transformation there! The black clouds had divided, and stood in jagged peaks, through whose crevices shone resplendent the glory of a gorgeous sunset.

"Ah!" exclaimed Adele, joyfully, "*that* is to be the grand total: a period of sunshine, a period of gloom, and then a sublime mingling of joy and woe. That is the sort of life to live!—no dull, gray monotony for me."

Persons of vivid nervous temperament, you may have observed, John, seldom lead monotonous lives. They *create* the varied circumstances, harmonious or discordant, by which their lives are moulded.

Let us suppose a man sunk waist-deep in a morass. If he remained there, merely calling upon God to deliver him, without making any other effort toward his extrication, at what time do you suppose his deliverance would be accomplished? At about the day of judgment, I am thinking, when the Shepherd is separating the sheep from the goats.

The world is wide, John, and if an individual chooses to settle into one little corner of it and vegetate there, it is his own fault. The contemplation of grand things inspires grand thoughts. The life that is doled out in one narrow spot, amid trivial and petty circumstances, is calculated to shape a mind of like proportions.

No longer, John, do we contemplate from our window a little landscape of brick-work. Our view expands into a wide and picturesque scene. A majestic river winds its slow and stately way adown a vista of

rugged hills. Along its sandy beach, where ceaselessly fluctuate the fretful waves, is stationed, here and there, a coppice of willow trees. We are in "the country," John.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BROKEN FETTERS.

At last Ophelia's wedding-day was fixed. She refused to have anything to do with her trousseau. Mamma cared for such things; *she* might attend to it. It was all foolishness any way—she had plenty of clothes. "I would as soon be engaged in preparing my shroud," she wrote to Adele, who replied, "You disappoint me, Ophelia. You are not as good as I thought you were, or you would be true to yourself. Don't you know it is as wicked and cruel to ruin your own life as to ruin the life of any other person?"

"Yes, it is ruined!" exclaimed Ophelia, dropping the letter, and covering her despairing face with her hands: "that is the truth. I shall be the bound slave of a tyrant. But, just Heaven! how am I to help myself?"

There was another letter to read, at which she had, as yet, scarcely glanced. She glanced at the strange superscription with but little curiosity. Then she opened it and read:—"If you are not simply marrying a fortune, and have a care as to the character of your husband, I advise you to let Mr. North go. If you are an honorable and virtuous woman, he is not the sort of husband you want. He is a villain and a scoundrel. There is not a *meaner* man on top of this earth. If you want proof, I can give it, in the presence of Mr. North himself."

Signed: Mrs. Kate Wharton, United States Hotel.

Ophelia carried this letter to her parents. She could have nothing to do with raking among rubbish for proof of her betrothed's villainies. Mr. Berges looked astonished, Mrs. Berges incredulous.

"It is a vile scandal raised by some envious woman who wanted him herself," she said. "I advise you, take no notice of it."

(The readiness with which women suspect each other has become proverbial.)

"But she gives her name and address," said Mr. Berges, "and that looks honest. Ophelia deserves a good husband, and North shall not have her if he fails to prove himself the gentleman he pretends to be. I have never thought him entirely worthy of Ophelia, any way."

"As to that," exclaimed Mrs. Berges, with a slight degree of irony in her tone, "*no one* is worthy of Ophelia."

"At any rate," returned her husband, "I shall call and see Mrs. Wharton before the day is out. An investigation of the matter can do no harm."

Mr. Berges returned home that evening looking stern. "Well, Ophelia, it is all up with your wedding, child."

"I am glad of it, papa," she returned calmly.

"Mrs. Wharton's proof was conclusive: so conclusive that North submitted without an effort to defend himself, under the condition that nothing should be said about it. Do you wish to hear the particulars? They are not very inviting to a refined mind, but if you desire it I will tell you all."

"No, I do not care to hear," she replied.

A month or so after, Mr. North was married to a proud, ambitious young woman, whom he had previously visited and it was reported that Ophelia was "jilted." But Ophelia could bear that. She could bear anything, she was so glad to be free; and the curious looks and jests were not near so hard to endure as the thoughts of linking her life with his.

But that was not the last of Mrs. Wharton. A short time after Mr. North's marriage, Ophelia received another letter in the same hand. She was alone and friendless, it said, and in doubt about many things. She stood in great need of a friend to help and advise her;—not money—she had plenty of money. She had seen Ophelia and believed her to be a true Christian,—one who would not refuse help to the distressed.

Ophelia was a dutiful child, and she took this letter to her father to ask his advice; but it was when her mother was absent, she knew very well that her mother would immediately and decidedly negative the whole proceeding.

"Use your own judgment," said her father. "Mrs. Wharton is not a lady of refinement or culture. She has apparently been reared in a low circle, and her life, I imagine, has not always been above reproach; and yet I believe the woman is truly repentant now, and anxious to mend her ways. It may be that you can do her some good without injuring yourself. It is necessary that young women should be very circumspect in regard to their associates, and yet there is such a thing as being too rigorous. Where there is a possibility of accomplishing any good, I doubt if it would be right to disregard such a message. It might harden a heart naturally suspicious and skeptical. We are very seldom too compassionate."

That afternoon found Ophelia taking an inventory of Mrs. Wharton's chamber, while the lady completed her evening toilette in the small dressing-room adjoining. The room, lavishly strewn with costly and useless articles, indexed an extravagant and unrefined nature; but even this did not prepare Ophelia for the gorgeous, over-dressed Cleopatra who swept forward to meet her. She looked keenly into the modest face of her visitor, and then, without the slightest hesitation or needless preliminaries, entered upon the subject of her wishes.

"I have everything that heart could wish," she said, with a slight and indescribable brogue, "and yet I am not happy. Christian people are happy. I want to know how to get to be a Christian. I am living a good life. I help whoever needs my help, I do nothing wrong, and yet that does not seem to be all. I want to know what else is required. I have never been inside of a church but once, and then I saw some of your saints turning up their noses at me. I have not always been what I ought to have been, but *now* I want to join the church and be a Christian. How am I to do this with your fine-spun saints turning up their noses and raising the devil in me? *You* are different. You do not scorn me?"

"Oh, no, Mrs. Wharton, I scorn no human being,—I have no right. Only, when they yield themselves to sin, it is right that we should separate ourselves from them, lest we seem to sanction their course, and lest we too—we are all weak and liable to error—fall into their evil ways. But when they have a real wish to reform, and become good and virtuous people, it is only right that we should help them."

Then she began at the beginning, and related all of her Christian experience, making such remarks as she thought befitted the occasion. But the blazing black eye never softened, and there was not the slightest abatement of her self-sufficient air. Ophelia saw that her words were without effect. Her mild recital made no impression whatever upon this fiery, hardened nature.

A pale, majestic face, and quiet, earnest, but powerful voice rose to her mind,—a young minister, of her own persuasion, but not of her own church. Though young, he had taken a heavy burden upon his shoulders. The care of his flock pressed heavily upon him,—a careless, wandering, worldly flock, whose minds were filled with the vanities of dress and money-getting. He was wearing himself out in their service, and yet he

took upon himself the blame of their straying. Somehow he had failed to discharge his duty,—had said too little or too much, or left something undone that he should have done,—or his fold would give stronger indications of his patient and earnest watch-care. So reasoned this faithful shepherd, growing thinner and graver with the increase of his cares. *This* was the man to soften stones, thought Ophelia, could they be brought within the pale of his influence.

"I do not know as well as I ought," she said, "how to direct you, but I know one who can. He is kind and gentle, yet strong. He knows how to make religion beautiful and attractive." She drew a card from her case, and wrote his address.

"Will you go with me?" The look was keen and piercing.

There was no sign of dissent in Ophelia's face, no reluctance or hesitancy in her tone, as she replied, "Certainly, Mrs. Wharton, if you wish it." And yet there flitted through her mind a picture of the surprised looks of her acquaintances, who might chance to meet her on the street with this gorgeous woman; and the haughty displeasure of mamma, should she ever find it out, caused her to quake inwardly.

The appointment was duly made; Ophelia was to call for her singular *protégée* upon the following afternoon.

"Another thing, Mrs. Wharton, I should like to suggest before I go," she said, a slight flush rising to her cheek: "I would recommend a plain and unobtrusive toilette when you attend divine service. Your gay and costly attire is apt to excite remark, and was, no doubt, the cause of your attracting unpleasant attention."

"What! must I give up my diamonds and fine dresses to please the hypocrites?" she exclaimed with a sort of snort.

"Mrs. Wharton," said Ophelia, firmly, "if you are truly in earnest in your desire to be a Christian, you

will esteem the privilege of attending church of far greater value than that of wearing fine clothes."

The following afternoon, Ophelia told her mother that she was going to call on the minister, when questioned as to her destination. Mrs. Berges looked somewhat surprised, but Ophelia did not feel it to be her duty to enter into particulars. She found Mrs. Wharton ready, and they were not long in finding their way to the minister's, where they were shown into the parlor and informed that "Mr. Beresford would be in presently." Ophelia was not sorry of the friendly shelter from the impolite scrutiny to which she had been subjected from chance acquaintances. Mrs. Wharton had not bedecked herself with her usual splendor, but, nevertheless, she had the look of an actress, prepared for some minor part upon the stage with her rouged cheeks and rather "odd" dress. Mrs. Wharton had not the heart to discard *all* of her jewels and ribbons at once. Who was to know that she was not the butcher's, the baker's, or the shoemaker's wife, if she wore plain clothes? And yet she had a faint idea that ministers were not to be imposed upon, like their weaker fellow-mortals, by costly array. And so she had, *partially*, followed Ophelia's advice.

Mr. Beresford received them kindly, and, if he felt any surprise, gave no sign of it. Ophelia made known the object of their visit at once. "I have seen that you were *anxious* for the salvation of souls," she said. "Mrs. Wharton came to me for advice and direction as to how she might become a Christian, and feeling my own incapacity for so high and important a work, I could think of no one more suited to such a task than yourself."

Mr. Beresford replied with an immediate and earnest interest that dispelled all restraint at once, and secured Mrs. Wharton's attention. It was no lecture; it was only an earnest conversation, in which Ophelia was called to take part. How plain he made everything!

how simple! and yet he did not lessen the dignity and importance of religion by making it appear to be an *easy* matter. It was within the reach of all,—because, where little is given, little is required,—but God was a jealous God, and would have no reluctant or half-way service.

It is remarkable with what dull minds some ministers go about their master's work. The servants of the devil often evince a deeper energy and a more vivid appreciation in their worldly service. It were better, if we do not *love* to speak of our kind Friend and Benefactor, that we remain silent, and not let the world see how weak and poor is our gratitude, lest they underrate the power which has inspired so insipid and shallow a feeling. Religion should be a serious and sacred subject with all Christians. The feelings which lie lightly upon the tongue must be wanting in depth.

Ophelia observed a more thoughtful, almost sad, expression upon Mrs. Wharton's face as they separated at the minister's gate, and she felt no fear in regard to her future. She had promised to attend church and to read her Bible, though she admitted that the most of it was as Greek to her.

A few days after, Mr. Beresford called on Ophelia and thanked her for her confidence in him, and expressed it as his belief that Mrs. Wharton would, in the course of time, become a truly Christian woman, and a useful member of society. Then he pronounced his judgment of what she had done.

"It is a question," he said, "that I doubt not many noble, pure-minded women have earnestly studied,—whether it were wise to take into their simple hands the reformation of misguided souls. Such a course would be noble, but unwise. You did well in transferring Mrs. Wharton into practiced hands. The evil of such natures as hers is of too rank a growth for tender hands like yours. You would accomplish more toward the marring of your own serenity of mind than toward

their reformation. It is not your duty to slip aside from respectable association to assist these people who, after all, are not apt to understand or appreciate your self-sacrifice."

"That seems a little selfish," said Ophelia, thoughtfully; "but I suppose I made myself liable to remark and misconstructions of a very disagreeable character, by appearing in public with so conspicuous and doubtful a personage. And these poor outcasts from respectable society, what is to become of them?—who is to help them?"

"Chronic evils, of strong and rude growth, can be dealt with successfully only by 'societies,' united forces, strong bodies. These alone can remove the evils which would only bruise such tender hands as yours. It is but just that the vicious should suffer for their own vices, but it is scarcely meet that the virtuous should share their shame."

Well, the fetters were broken,—Ophelia was free again,—and gradually her old friends returned. Herve came frequently, and always met with a cordial reception. His manner was much the same as before—grave, quiet, but self-confident. He appeared to take more interest in ladies' society, perhaps because they took more interest in his. However, notwithstanding his popularity with the favorites of society, Herve was frequently found in obscure corners, talking with some neglected girl who had no showy accomplishments to recommend her to public attention. It was his way.

"Dr. Hughes" was now a regular practicing physician in the city, and relieved his honored patron from the more wearisome and less scientific portion of his practice. He was highly respected and thoroughly trusted by his patients, especially the poor. The solid men of L—— spoke of him as a "rising man," and the solid men's daughters began to consider him an object worthy of their consideration, and to act accordingly. However, I scarcely think our young friend

ever attained that degree of popularity which drove the modest Virgil into the corners and by-ways of Athens, and kept him skulking in obscure alleys.

Kingsley never came anear. Since Adele had left, he went into society but little, and then bestowed all of his attention upon Miss Louise Benton, a young lady whom he had met at Crab Orchard. Ophelia, who had yielded reluctantly to her love, who had fought against it with shame and stern disapprobation, was very thankful to him for keeping himself out of her way. "He had *made* her love him," she said to herself, and now that he had withdrawn his influence she was free.

Not so, O! Ophelia! A passion held in abeyance is not dead. All human conquests are only temporary. Nothing that is *of the soul* dies. He who no longer loves has *never* loved. *Love* is of the spirit, and is absolutely indestructible. The feelings which perish are of the senses.

But Ripley came. He had recovered from his fit of the sulks, and taking advantage of his influence with his aunt, Mrs. Berges, harassed her more than ever with the same questions, the same demands, over and over. He knew that she dared resent nothing. He demanded her love as his right, and the soft, dark eyes that could look upon her with unutterable tenderness could also accord her looks that were sullen or fierce with bitter resentment. If she spoke kindly to soothe the anger her indifference aroused, he suddenly flushed with hope, and presumed upon her kindness as encouragement.

"But, Hal," she would say, with rising anger, "I do not love you!—I cannot love you!—it is impossible!"

"Oh, Ophelia, you would love me when we were married; you could not help it; I would be so good to you; I would love you so devotedly; your every wish should be gratified; nothing should ever trouble

you, if I could help it; you should be the happiest darling in the city; no woman would be so petted and adored."

"Hush, Hal! Love and fine things could not make me happy; besides, I have no wish for adoration,—that belongs to the Deity alone. Hal, you do not understand my disposition at all. When you discovered how different were our tastes and feelings, you would no longer love me. I have some qualities which you could have no patience with."

"Oh, I would be willing to risk that. You have no bad traits; I know that, Ophelia. You are as near perfection as any human being on this earth; I would not have you different; just as you are you please me, Ophelia."

"Perfection! That shows how little you know me. Hal, you have no idea of the wickedness that sometimes lies hidden in my heart! If I should marry you, and could not love you, Hal, I should hate and despise you; and there is no telling to *what* such a desperate state of affairs might drive me; I might be tempted to murder you!"

"I am not afraid," persisted Hal; "only say you will marry me."

"It is useless to speak to me on this subject any more, Hal," she said, impatiently. "You will always receive the same answer: I cannot love you; it is impossible!"

He was silent for a moment, looking at her with a strange expression that made her shudder. "I know why—you love Kingsley?"

"You are mistaken, Hal. It is only because I naturally have no love for you." She could not bring herself to say, "I naturally *hate* you."

"I don't care; you shall never marry Kingsley!" he said fiercely.

"I don't want to marry Kingsley," said Ophelia, ready to cry from mortification and anger; "but I am

determined never to marry *you*, and I don't want you to come here any more."

"I WILL!" said Ripley; and continued to come.

Mr. Berges always seemed to like Hal, and Mrs. Berges, having been thwarted in her former matrimonial scheme, was more determined than ever to overrule Ophelia's stubborn will and dispose of her to her own satisfaction and credit; therefore, Ophelia was compelled to hold her peace and submit to the enforced companionship, no matter how great her reluctance. She never appeared in public now without him, and it was generally believed that they were engaged.

In these dark days—days without either pleasure or profit—Ophelia turned to Herve, as she had always turned to his sister, for comfort. In their *real*, inner nature, this brother and sister were very much alike. But for Adele's wonderful beauty, which had drawn upon her unusual temptations to frivolity, indolence, and a false levity, and surrounded her with an atmosphere of adulation and seductive excitement, she might have been as earnest, as steady, and reliable as her brother. Better, far better, had it been for Adele had she been, as her mother said, "homely, like her sisters." What real pleasure had her beauty ever brought her? It had excited the envy of her sisters and embittered her home life; it had created in her mind a thirst for popularity and social distinction, and finally had drawn around her the brilliant, unscrupulous men of society, who sought their own pleasure and amusement regardless of all consequences.

I am not deeply versed in theological lore, John, and am sorely puzzled, now and then, in trying to solve the grand problem of life, "Right and Wrong." And as you are not quite so visionary and fanciful, and a little more substantial in the matter of judgment, it behooves me to appeal to you in all questions upon which I incline to heterodox opinions.

In the parable of the "talents," wherein one scrupulous personage carefully deposited his small portion in a very secret and safe place of keeping, the "talent" is supposed to represent intellectual qualifications. Now, John, would any but an idiot fear to lose his mind by using it?

It is my opinion that the "talent" typifies one's *piety*. He held himself aloof from the world, for fear of contamination. He plodded over one little circle of duties, day after day, fearing to venture beyond, because of the publicans and sinners. He could not bring himself to mingle freely with them for the purpose of doing them good, because he feared that his righteous soul might suffer a diminution of its sanctity.

It is possible that others besides you and I, John, may hold this same opinion, but whenever I have been lectured from this text, it has always been for the purpose of impressing upon my mind the utmost importance of improving my mental faculties, and of urging my thoughts to their loftiest limits of conception, but *never*, under any circumstances, to allow myself to be drawn into any society but the most correct and improving.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE UNKNOWN BRIDEGROOM.

As it grew unpleasantly warm in L——, and cases of sunstroke and cholera began to be reported, all of those fortunate inhabitants who found it practicable transformed their wardrobe into baggage, forsook their old haunts, and hurried off to fashionable summer resorts, or rural retreats, according to their circumstances and means. But few remained behind as a

matter of choice, for the good citizens of L—— love their ease, and think of comfort as well as gain.

"Papa, I have a proposition to make," said Ophelia, as they all sat around the table discussing the "where" and "how" for disposing of themselves for the summer. Mrs. Berges was in favor of Saratoga or Newport; but Mr. Berges voted those too exclusive to be entertaining, filled up as they were with the same sets year after year. Nahant belonged to Boston, Cape May to Philadelphia; but Long Branch was more cosmopolitan, more representative of the people of the United States. He had visited them all, and decidedly preferred Long Branch.

"Because we spent our honeymoon at Long Branch," suggested Mrs. Berges, with a smile. Mr. Berges admitted that that might have something to do with his preference, and then inquired of his daughter what her proposition might be.

"I want Adele to go with us. I will wear my old dresses,—and they are plenty good enough,—or go to some cheap place, if Adele may go along."

"What! give up Long Branch and a chance of creating a sensation with a handsome new outfit, to have a dashing rival go along? Such generosity and self-sacrifice deserve to be encouraged. Adele shall go, if only to prove the endurable quality of feminine friendship. Only you must allow me to laugh at the recital of your grievances at the end of the tour."

Adele came joyfully at their summons, and agreed to submit to the humility of sharing Ophelia's wardrobe, that she might be no discredit to the party; she would submit to *anything* rather than spend another lonely, tiresome summer at home.

Mr. and Mrs. Waltman had returned from their bridal tour, had taken a handsome house, and commenced housekeeping in great style. Mrs. Waltman unexpectedly called one afternoon. "Of course Miss Hughes must naturally feel hard toward her for taking

Sid away from her, poor thing!" she reasoned compassionately, "and so she would waive ceremony and call first."

She could talk of nothing but "Sid, Sid." There never was such a husband, never! the most devoted lover! And really it was not such a wonder, he had a right to be proud of her. She had created the greatest sensation wherever they went; and *everybody* had fallen in love with her. She could not count the number of handsome young men who had flocked around her, so that Sid was made tremendously jealous every day, and would sometimes leave her a whole afternoon, he was so vexed. But she did not care for that; Mr. Sid must get used to such things. She didn't intend to settle down into a "sitting hen" because she was married—not she.

In vain Ophelia and Adele tried to change the subject into a less personal channel. Nothing else interested her, and she was determined to talk of nothing else. "They are envious," she thought, and Viola enjoyed exciting any one's envy; and so she spoke on no other topic, until just as she was leaving, then she suddenly exclaimed,—

"Oh, Adele, I forgot to tell you I saw Kingsley yesterday evening about dusk promenading with a dark-haired lady, who was evidently very much in love with him. I may be mistaken, but it's my opinion that her social standing is exceedingly low. I must say I was surprised. I never would have thought that of Kingsley; he was always such a high-minded young gentleman."

"You must be mistaken," said Adele, coldly.

"No, I am not," exclaimed Viola, growing more certain as she saw her judgment doubted. "She had on a *very* short suit, such as no *real* ladies wear now, and a dingy scarf, without a *bit* of fringe on it that I could see, and a winter hat! Now, Adele, a *winter* hat this time of year! Could she have been much?"

It was useless to argue with Viola. She was one of those persons whom it is unpleasant to dispute with. Her judgments, no matter upon how slender a foundation they were formed, stood firm in her own mind, because she respected no power of discernment so highly as her own.

"The little goose!" exclaimed Adele, closing the door after her. "She don't know what she's talking about half the time."

But Ophelia, who was in the habit of rating every one's judgment above her own, was not so skeptical. She felt a sort of anguish at the thought of Kingsley's unworthiness, as if he had been anything to her. There is no use in trying to escape the consequences of sin in this world. If we succeed in preserving our own souls from sin, we must suffer for the sins of others.

The L—— "delegation" at Long Branch this season included a goodly portion of the *élite* of the city (according to newspaper report), among whom were Major Boynton, Hal Ripley, and Sid's honored uncle Mr. Beckworth. Sid declined going, his finances being in a collapsed condition from recent heavy drains. And Herve? no amount of pleasure could possibly have induced Herve to desert his post in this most sickly season of the year; and so, while this gay party strolled upon the beach, read poetry, and talked sentiment in the moonlight, Herve plodded the hot streets, and sat by sick beds where the tainted air breathed of disease and death. Is not his a beautiful character? this sober, earnest, faithful, unfanciful Herve! He could never have written a poem, not even a fanciful little story, if he had tried ever so hard; but he could do better things than these,—he could diminish the pain of aching bodies; he could lighten the heavy hearts of the despondent; and even to the sin-sick soul he could point the way of life.

He was loved and trusted by his patients. Merely the sight of his genial face, and the sound of his cheer-

ful voice made them better. With all its wearying duties and responsibilities, Herve loved and honored his profession, else he could never have acquired that power and position in it to which he had attained in so short a time. To attain to any eminent degree of success in any profession, it is necessary that one should hold it in high respect. One may toil with the hands while the spirit holds disdainfully aloof, secretly scorning his occupation, and it may bring him his daily bread, but no honor. So long as he refuses to bestow upon it proper respect, it will yield him no pleasure.

And so Herve administered powders and pills, and kind, cheering words to his sick and afflicted, and counted it much better than loitering amid scenes of gayety; and he carried a much more contented heart with him than many of the gay pleasure-seekers; a thousand times that summer did he say, "this is better than enjoyment."

One morning as he sat at his desk engaged in preparing the mortuary statistics of the city,—his patron being one of the directors of the Board of Health,—some one entered. As he had nearly finished, he did not think it necessary to relinquish his work, and continued writing. When he had thrown down his pen and pushed back his chair, a surly voice exclaimed:

"Well, I suppose you are through, at last?"

Dr. Hughes arose in astonishment. It was Tom.

"Why, Tom, how in the world did you get here? I supposed that you were a fixture in St. Louis."

"*Hoped* so, I suppose," said Tom, sullenly. "Came by rail; how else would I get here?"

Herve shook his brother's hand cordially, and replied: "Oh, there are such things as balloons, and wings are talked of for the twentieth century. We hadn't heard from you for so long, we thought you had grown prosperous and forgotten us all. Where's your wife?"

"In St. Louis," Tom replied, drily.

"You ought to have brought her with you. It would give me great pleasure to form the acquaintance of my sister-in-law."

"I don't know as you'll ever have that pleasure. The fact is, Meta was disappointed in me. She thought I was rich. And her mother hated me and kept us in continual hot water. It was a dog's life. I couldn't stand it, so I came away."

Herve looked serious.

Now that he was started, and the disagreeable introductory through with, Tom flowed on as fluently as of yore. He was tired of St. Louis, any way. There was no society, no refinement in the place. Herve refrained from suggesting that he was seeking in the wrong place when he expected to find it in a gambling-saloon. He wanted to go to Chicago. There was a city worth talking about! "I met a fellow by the name of Curry, —a real sharp, shrewd chap he was too,—who said"— and here followed a verbose account of the marvels that could be performed in the way of making money in the wonderful city of Chicago.

"Curry is going, and—the fact is, I need a little change, Herve. I shall want a little to start on, and—could you *loan* me about fifty dollars? I would be much obliged to you, and would soon be able to pay you back."

"I haven't that much in the world, Tom."

"Well, twenty-five would do, I suppose. You surely have *twenty-five*, Herve."

Herve took out his pocket-book and counted out the desired sum without a word. There was precious little left. Tom was profuse in his thanks, and soon took his leave in high spirits. He was off for Chicago, to make his fortune.

The next day he was back. He had been on a little spree, and somehow lost his money. He looked crestfallen and sick, and whined over his "misfortunes" until Herve had much ado to keep his temper.

"I collected a little money yesterday, Tom; and if I thought your going to Chicago would do you any good, you might have it. Take my advice: go back to your wife."

"Never!" exclaimed Tom, fiercely.

Herve counted out another twenty-five, and felt as if he were depositing it in a "faro bank." "I can't do anything with *that*," said Tom, doggedly. "It would take it all to get there; and how should I live until I got into business?"

But he took it, nevertheless. "I might get work here. You are pretty well known by this time, and might recommend me."

"What sort of work, Tom?"

"Oh, anything—anything that is genteel, of course. No dray-driving, grocery drudgery, or anything of that sort, you know. Something in the liquor line. That is my forte."

"I should prefer the dray-driving," said Herve.

"There is where our tastes differ. You know we never could agree on that subject, and so there's no use to discuss it."

After a little further talk, Tom took his departure, promising to call when he needed that "recommendation, security, or anything of that sort."

I expect no sympathy for this character. One may pity such; but sympathy involves a degree of respect to which poor Tom has forfeited all claim. As for *pity*, I doubt not but Tom was of the opinion of the individual who averred that "it cost nothing and was worth nothing."

And yet, Tom's boyhood gave as fair promise of noble manhood as his respected brother's. Though not of so solid and firm a structure, he was quicker and keener. But you know how whisky undermines the character, depraves the healthy propensities, and turns all the good of one's nature into evil.

In due time our Long Branch party returned to

their homes. Every one had had a "delightful time," and had much to relate in regard to their experiences. Miss Hughes had returned home. It was rumored that she was to be married soon to a wealthy New Yorker. One of the party professed to have heard the courtship; and the young lady's reply, according to the informant, was so characteristic that no one doubted the genuineness of the report.

"I am poor, Mr. Brady,—poor as the beggar who sat at Dives' gate; if you know how poor that is."

"It is no matter," returned the gallant Mr. Brady; "I am rich, and that is sufficient."

Our informant, being obliged to move on at this juncture, could report no further, but there were no doubts entertained in regard to the answer. Of course "the beggar who sat at Dives' gate" wouldn't be such a fool as to decline being transferred therefrom to fine raiment and a palace. There was another party, however, who suspected Major Boynton of being the lucky man. At any rate, of one thing all were certain,—Miss Hughes was undoubtedly to be married to *somebody*. Therefore no one was surprised when invitations to a reception at Mr. Berges's were issued.

The marriage was performed in a little country church, with a few of the good neighbors for witnesses. Major Boynton was not to be found in the city that day, so he was supposed to be the happy man. The reception that evening was a grand success. All the *élite* of L—— were there. Such a crush of rich poplins, silks, tulle, and laces, with jewels rare (including borrowed and hired!) enough to ransom a city.

Suddenly a hush fell upon the crowded rooms, and a sort of thrill ran through the expectant assembly. Sid Waltman, who had been flitting gayly here and there, stood suddenly as if turned to stone, for there beside the woman whom he had once worshiped, his keen eye taking in everything with its wonted rapidity and calmness, bowing and smiling in return for the exclamations

and congratulations of the crowd, stood his honored uncle, Mr. Beckworth. Could it be possible? or was this some trick? And then he looked farther on, in the expectation of seeing Major Boynton or that New Yorker. But neither were there.

And the bride? If she had been lovely in her simple toilette, in her rich bridal robe she was resplendent. Could there have been anything lovelier than that heavy white silk, faintly tinted with blue? All the other ladies straightway felt angry with themselves for not having thought of it before. There was a lace bertha and a short lace overskirt, looped here and there with blush roses. The train was three yards long. The dress must surely have been imported, for there had never been anything like it in the city before. Her coiffure was elaborate, and in strict accordance with the prevailing mode; and diamond ear-rings glistened in her pearly ears.

How perilously beautiful the creature was! Her eyes appeared larger and more lustrous than ever, and she looked about with a half-gracious, half-satirical smile, evidently enjoying the sensation she was creating.

As Sid stood against the wall, viewing the scene with an inscrutable countenance,—a sort of wooden countenance,—some one touched his elbow. "You seem in no hurry to make known to your uncle your approbation of his choice," said an ironical voice.

The sound aroused him, but so preoccupied were his thoughts that he did not even perceive the taunt embodied in the speech. He hunted up his wife. There was nothing poetical in the over-dressed little woman, and Sid examined the bedizened little figure disapprovingly. Poetical thought vanishes at the sight of such loads of jewelry and flying ribbons. With this bundle of millinery on his arm, Sid presented himself to pay his respects to his uncle's bride. She received him graciously,—it was the first time she had

seen him since his marriage,—and extended her congratulations in return without the slightest embarrassment.

There was a rich repast and wine in abundance, but not in excess; after, music and dancing. All was life and gayety, and every one seemed in a high state of enjoyment. All except Ophelia, who stole away from the crowd into gloomy recesses of the grounds, and wept among the shrubbery. She had lost her friend! They would never more be to each other as they had been. From this night their paths in life diverged.

The night closes down. There is no moon, and the purplish shadows upon the lawn make me half afraid. Do not look so doleful, John. There *must* be a little dark, you know, that we may the more enjoy the light. Smile a little, can't you?

I am no *machine*, John, to plod on and on, with no enlivening compliments and smiles. I must pause a little, now and then, to sun myself, and to warm all the chilling fears, the worry and trouble, out of my mind, in the balmy inspiration of your genial presence. I am a worthless vagabond, perhaps, to be wanting to stop work, now and then, to idle in the sun.

My love of comfort, of beauty and luxury, would make me an unsafe ruler, I fear, because I should be too ready to confer rewards, too loath to administer punishment.

Bravo! That was well done, John; but I advise you to look a little less pleasing, or I shall be wanting to lecture you a few hours longer,—I find it so enchanting to be admired and approved.

Now have I some faint conception of the pre-eminent satisfaction which sustained the fair Scheherezade through those tedious "thousand and one nights," when she found her lord postponing her execution that he might hear the conclusion of her story.

CHAPTER XX.

DOMESTIC BLISS.

After a short visit to Baltimore, where dwelt the greater portion of Mr. Beckworth's aristocratic relations, the bridal pair returned to L——. Mrs. Beckworth had scarcely had time to unpack her trunks before half the city rushed to call on her. Mrs. Waltman was among the first. "Surely any one ought to be happy here," she said, looking around upon the handsome furniture. "Mr. Beckworth must be very rich. I think he ought to help his nephew a little more than he does."

Adele made no reply whatever.

"It's not romantic at all, to be married, as I thought it would be," she continued. "There is more of the dust-pan and cooking-stove in it than anything else. Servants have to be watched, or they'll leave dirt in the corners, steal the meat, or waste the groceries. Ma says she has had to look into such things all her life, and so does every married woman who expects to be of any service to her husband. I want Sid to think I'm some account, but I do wish these things would come right without so much bother. Just think! Sid hasn't taken me to the opera since we were married,—only on our tour,—nor any place else scarcely; and I thought he would be so proud of me, and want to take me everywhere. But Sid has very much to do. I don't see any use in his working so hard. Pa's rich, and it all belongs to me. I told him so once, but he said it was doing him no good if it did; and was not likely ever to do him any good. I am afraid Sid and pa have had a little quarrel. I mean to ask pa for some money,—then we can live a little easier. And don't you

think, I've got but one dress—barely one—since I was married! and that's not paid for. It's an awful thing to be in debt! I live in constant terror of the bills."

"I suppose your husband has given up all his clubs and old haunts, now that he is married and has some one to stay at home with him of evenings?" said Adele, in the hope of diverting the subject.

"Oh, dear, no! Sid is a politician, and has to attend all sorts of meetings, you know. They have splendid suppers for him sometimes, and Sid loves nice things to eat; and, to tell the truth, that is what we seldom have at home, our cook is such a trifling one. Have you a good cook? We'll come around and take tea, some time,—Sid and I,—when he has no other engagement. You're our aunt now, you know." And she laughed merrily.

Adele replied that their cook seemed to understand her business, and that they would be pleased to have the honor of their company to tea any time they wished to come.

"I used to think," resumed Viola, "that it would be so grand to dress of evenings and run down to meet Sid and get kissed and made much of; but Sid is always tired and hungry, and thinks more about eating than kissing, and he never cares what I have on; says calico is as good as anything; and if my hair is ever so nicely done, he never knows it. It's quite disheartening, I assure you. Does Mr. Beckworth care what you have on, or how you arrange your hair?"

"He selects my wardrobe to suit his own fancy, and orders the dressing of my hair as regularly as he orders dinner. I have no trouble about anything," returned Adele.

"And all you have to do is to sit up and be handsome, or drive about and amuse yourself as you please?" said Viola, with a sigh.

"That is all," returned Mrs. Beckworth, unconsciously answering the sigh.

Viola looked at her a moment with silent envy, and perhaps wonder that she seemed so indifferent and unthankful for her happy fate. "Oh dear!" she exclaimed, at length, a little petulantly. "If *I* only had such a chance, how happy I would be!"

Mrs. Beckworth was silent, and Viola, looking at her watch, suddenly exclaimed that it was six; and Sid would be at home at six, and that she must hurry. She kissed Adele hurriedly, and, with many injunctions "to call soon," hastened down the hall. At the door she paused to inquire about Kingsley; talked half an hour longer; then suddenly recollecting herself, broke away and hurried down the street.

Sid was already at home. He received her apologies placidly, being engrossed in his evening paper. She sat down by him and pulled at the paper. "Do put it up, Sid. How tiresome you are! You are at home little enough, and then you must always be poking over a paper or a book. You don't have to go away this evening, do you, Sid?"

"Yes; with Peters: to a convention," returned Sid, continuing to read.

"I wish Peters was dead!" returned Viola, pouting. "You are always going off some place with Peters."

Sid did not look up from his paper.

"Please, ma'am," said Bridget, at the door, "hair's a boy from Madame B——'s with a bill. Says it's forty dollars for makin' yer dress, and that she's not a-going to wait no longer."

"Why didn't you send him away?" exclaimed Viola, in alarm.

"I did, mum, but he wouldn't go."

The boy stood stubbornly at the door, holding the bill.

"I'll write her a note," said Viola, in a flurry; "perhaps she'll wait."

"You needn't," said the boy, "for she said I weren't to bring her no more notes, and that she needed the money."

Sid smoked and read phlegmatically.

"Sid, why don't you tell me what to do?" pouted Viola.

"Do as you please, Viola. I've not got forty dollars in the world."

Viola rummaged in a drawer, and produced a five-dollar bill, which she gave the boy, with a promise to come down soon and "settle" for the remainder. The boy took it sullenly and vanished.

Supper was announced, and during the meal Viola entered into minute description of her afternoon call. Sid listened with interest, but made no comments.

They had scarcely returned from supper when there was a ring, and some one was heard in the hall inquiring for Mr. Waltman.

"It's Peters, I know; and you're not going now, Sid? We were having such a nice time."

"Come in, Peters," said Mr. Waltman, rising and handing him a chair.

Mr. Peters was a large, fine-looking gentleman, with a commanding air; a gentleman of political distinction and influence, whom Sid was anxious to cultivate. He advanced smilingly, and with the air of a man who is sure of a gracious reception.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Waltman," he said, making his best bow to the pretty lady of the house.

But the pretty lady of the house looked sullen, and scarcely returned his polite greeting.

"Sit down, Peters," said his friend, wheeling an easy-chair toward the grate.

"Thank you, no," returned Mr. Peters, beginning to perceive a chilliness in the atmosphere. "Are you going to the convention? It is quite time we were off."

"No, Mr. Peters," said Viola, briskly, "he is *not* going to the convention. I should like very well to have you come here, Mr. Peters, if you came for any good, for I think you are a real nice gentleman; but so long as you come to take my husband away, I'd

rather not have you come. It seems to me there's a sight of conventions to go to."

Mr. Peters's handsome physiognomy reddened. He fumbled with his hat without saying a word. He had no resources wherewith to deal with angry, impolite women. That sort of business was out of his line. He was accustomed to the utmost deference from the ladies, and this sudden defiance completely astounded as well as angered him.

"The fact is, Peters, my wife is a very pretty, affectionate little creature," said Sid, when they were in the street; "but she's a silly child, and allowances must be made for her. I have to resort to all sorts of expedients to get off from her of evenings. It is too bad to leave her so much alone, but she's very tiresome, and the time is as good as wasted; and you will allow I have no time to waste. I tell you, Peters, it is as necessary that a man should marry his intellectual equal as it is that a woman should; though I did not think so once. Tyranny, *petty* tyranny,—the worst sort,—always comes from inferior, never from superior, minds. An equilibrium is the safest position for the matrimonial scales. Let a fool get a claim on you, and your life is not worth a button, as regards comfort. What fools young fellows are, to be so crazy to get married!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Peters, who having outlived all desire for domestic bliss, lived in a continued state of regret that he had not married young. The oracle who had "been there" was unburdening his mind, and Peters was not unwilling to profit by its utterances.

"Yes," continued Sid, "it is slavery any way you can fix it. When a man marries he chains himself to one spot, one set of surroundings, and one constant companion. The idea that you cannot get away from her all your life long is exasperating. What a lot of lies I'll have to invent about to-night's proceedings! And if I should chance to get home a little top-heavy,

I shall have to submit to enough reproaches and lectures and abuse to drive any human being into an insane asylum. A married man must be a devil or a milk-sop. I prefer the former."

"But all women are not shrews," said Mr. Peters, rather indignantly.

"Viola is as mild-tempered as any of them, I guess," returned Sid. "Give them their own way, and they are all sunshine and smiles; cross their will, and I'd rather encounter a full-blown hurricane. I used to think I could twist Viola around my finger, she was such a simple-minded, innocent creature. Managing a goose is the hardest thing in the world. It can see *nothing*,—not even when you are acting for its own advantage,—and distrusts everything its little mind fails to comprehend."

Peters, who had been endeavoring to get his courage up to the point of proposing to Mrs. Wimple, a "gay and festive" widow, comfortably deferred the matter to the indefinite future.

Viola cried awhile after her husband had gone, then got out her papier-maché writing-desk, and detailed to "darling Laura," her Pittsburg confidante, a transcript of her woes, interspersed with brilliant memoranda of her wedding tour and an inventory of her trousseau. Then she got out her finery, and amused herself with trying it on, and was somewhat comforted with the ecstatic admiration of her handmaid, who found sitting in Mrs. Waltman's boudoir, extolling her finery, rather more entertaining than washing dishes in the kitchen.

"Yer *was* a purty bride, sure!" exclaimed Bridget, as her mistress in a trailing comet-like robe of white silk paraded the room.

"*Was?*" exclaimed Viola. "Am not I as good-looking *now?*"

"Well, no'm, not *quite*, yer know. *Nothin'* stays purty long, nowadays. Yer eyes are a *leëtle* holler, and

yer jaws a trifle slimmer; but that don't make no difference, now ye'r married."

"It *does* make difference!" cried Viola, examining her countenance in the mirror with a horrified expression: "Oh! it's true; I'm getting old and ugly!"

"Oh, dear no'm! Just look at them purty blue eyes, and yer curly hair, and that figger! Yer look sweet and purty yet in yer bridal dress and wail."

"I wish it was my shroud," said Viola, gloomily. "Oh, what a fool I was to get married! I never get to go any place, and Sid don't care for me any more. He would be glad if I *was* dead."

She took off her finery and climbed upon the bed, where she cried herself to sleep. Bridget stuffed the silk and satin things into the bureau and wardrobe, and went down to the alley gate to discuss the matter with the Bridget next door.

Three o'clock found Sid on his way home. He sat down on a doorstep to rest, and also to collect his thoughts enough to remember where he lived. Was it next door to the Crystal Palace? or somewhere on B street? Yes, B was the street,—but what number? In this maze he dropped to sleep. When he awoke some one was shaking him.

"Come, young man, get up! You must go with me." It was a policeman.

He took hold of Sid, who muttered that it was "devilish cool," but allowed himself to be led off. Suddenly the officer stopped under the full glare of a street lamp.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Name?—name?" muttered Sid, "hanged if I haven't forgotten."

"It's not Waltman?"

"But it is though. Sid Waltman: that's it. First-rate fellow. Can'date for rep'sen'tive. Give 'im your vote, old fel! *He's* your man!"

The policeman "switched off" upon another track with his passenger, and conducted him home. There

he gave him his pistol, which he had found on the steps beside him, and also a bit of advice. By this time the "can'date for rep'sen'tive" had "come around" enough to comprehend the situation and make the policeman a present of the pistol, with an intimation that the "less said on this subject, the sooner mended."

This was eight months after marriage. Another eight months, and we will lift the curtain again.

Sid is examining the grocer's account, with his feet on the mantle, and three ugly wrinkles between his brows. Viola is chewing tulu in the corner.

"Viola, we must have a little more economy about this house. Our grocery bill gets worse and worse every month," said Sid, as he closed the book.

Viola exclaimed that she didn't know anything about economy, and she didn't want to know anything about it. It was hard enough getting along as it was, without trying to economize.

"Expenses must be lessened some way," said the gentleman of the house. "I am horribly in debt, and see no chance of ever getting out, if things go on much longer at this rate. You have nothing to do, Viola: you might nurse your baby, I think. Other women, who are in better circumstances than we are, nurse their children."

"*My* baby, indeed!" exclaimed Viola, in high indignation. (You will excuse me from recording *all* Viola said on this head. I ought occasionally to leave a little to your imagination, any way. At least, so I have been instructed by responsible critics.) "Suppose you try nursing it awhile yourself," she concluded. "*I've* had trouble enough with it, I think. And I don't believe you have ever touched the child."

"I have other things to occupy my time, without acting as dry nurse," returned Sid, with dignity. "Kitty, you can go home. You don't treat the child very well, anyway."

The nurse was off in a twinkling: "was goin' any

way, 'cause Mrs. Waltman slapped her jaws, and she warn't used to being cuffed round like a dog."

"Shut your mouth, you good-for-nothing minx!" was Viola's valedictory to her departing handmaid, and then she turned the battery upon her husband. "I won't nurse the baby—I *won't!*—and have my clothes a fright! You can nurse it yourself, Mr. Sid, you are so smart! I'm going straight over to pa's." And as soon as she could get herself ready, she went.

Sid called the cook to attend to the baby until her mistress returned. "She'll not stay long, I suppose; and, Johnson, try and get up as nice a dinner as you can to-day. I've a friend coming to dine."

"There's nothin' in the house to make a good dinner," returned Johnson. "Nothin' but the flour and steak."

"Well, get what you want at the grocery."

"Won't credit us *there* any more. Says we owes a bill, and bin a owin' it for several months."

"There," exclaimed Sid, tossing her a bill, "take that and do the best you can with it," and Sid hurried off.

The cook's "best" was a new bow and sundry adornments for a coming festival, after which she purchased a little celery and some cranberries.

At the usual dinner-hour Sid ushered his friend into the sitting-room. He found dinner all ready and in tolerable order, but no mistress, and the baby squalling. Cook had to attend to the baby, and Sid and his friend were reduced to the necessity of helping themselves as best they could.

Sid made all the apologies and excuses he could think of. "Wife called off suddenly, parents sick," etc.

"Why, it must be very sudden," exclaimed the guest. "I saw the old gentleman at the Hall this morning."

"Well, it was only the old lady, then, I presume," returned the host.

His friend expressed his regrets feelingly—more, perhaps, on account of the shabby viands than the absence

of his friend's pretty wife (whom he privately voted a "pert chit," and who, in her domestic confabs, voted him "a stick").

By the time they were through, the cook had got the baby to sleep, and Sid conducted his guest into the sitting-room, where he entertained him like the thoroughbred gentleman he was (at rare intervals). The cradle had been brought into the sitting-room, that the father might keep a watchful eye upon his sleeping offspring while the cook "cleared away the dishes."

The cigars were fine, and the room pretty and pleasant, and Sid, with a new sense of freedom and relief, talked volubly and eloquently. He was a lover of the fine arts, especially of poesy and romance. Politics and business had been dropped at the street-door. When they were in the height of a discussion in regard to the different schools of fictitious literature,—the sensational, the sentimental, the erudite, philosophical, religious, etc.,—the young scion of the house of Waltman reared itself in the cradle and broke forth into a terrific volley of yells. Sid hastened to the cradle, patted the "lovey dovey," and endeavored to coax it to be a "sweet little darling" and go to "sleepey;" but this sort of suasion was shorn of its power, and the yells continued with unabated force.

Then Sid swore, and cursed the "infernal toad" until he was in as great a passion as his screaming offspring. He searched the house for the cook, and called loudly, but the cook it is likely was making a call next door.

The visitor got out his watch, and extended it with what he supposed to be an extremely fascinating smile (the damage that smile was wont to create in the ranks of the fair!), but it failed here. The terrible infant screamed on. Then he got out his cigar-case and his knife, and arranged them in attractive array; but the high-spirited creature scorned the whole collection. Then he got picture-books, vases, anything he could

lay his hands on. Finally, espying an oft-forbidden work-box of Viola's within reach of its claws, this small descendant of the Eden couple seized upon the coveted treasure. The inherent tendency to disobedience was too strong. There was a lull,—peace reigned once more.

"What is it?—boy or girl?" inquired the bachelor friend, eyeing it curiously.

"A darned girl, you might know," exclaimed the unhappy father, wiping the perspiration from his face.

"Ah!" exclaimed his friend, with a cynical smile. "Girls don't seem to be at a premium in this establishment. Has the mild temper of her father, as well as his black eyes."

"She's very good, usually," said Sid, apologetically. "But I dismissed her nurse this morning, and Viola wanted to make some calls with her mother, I believe, and——"

"I thought your wife's mother was sick!" exclaimed the visitor.

"Oh, is she? I didn't know that!" said Sid.

"Why, you told me so yourself; said she had been called off on that account."

"Oh, hang it! I forgot that. By Jove, I believe I'm losing my mind!"

"This electioneering business has upset you a little," suggested his friend.

"I suppose so," returned Sid, gloomily.

"Now that that juvenile horn is silenced, suppose we go," was his friend's next suggestion.

Sid had to hunt up the cook first, and then they made their exit just as it was tuning up for another overture.

Upon his return at night Sid was somewhat alarmed to find the house entirely deserted. No Viola, no baby, no cook! It was not long, however, before Johnson made her appearance. She had been to the grocery, and the baby had been sent for directly after they left. Mrs. Waltman was "round to her mother's, very ill."

Sid read his paper until supper was ready, then smoked a cigar, after which he walked leisurely around to his father-in-law's, expecting to find Viola pouting and the old folks in a fit of the sulks. He walked in without ringing, and was surprised to find no one in the sitting-room. Hearing a faint hum of voices in the adjoining room, he pushed open the door and entered. Some one was stretched upon the bed, with a countenance swathed in white cloths.

"Who is it?" he inquired of a servant, who replied that it was "Mrs. Waltman."

The family were crowded around the bed. There were two physicians. Sid took one of them aside, and anxiously inquired what was the matter. The physician said "catalepsis loquax;" at which Sid stared, and looked helpless.

"Is there any danger?" he inquired.

The physician smiled slightly. "Not immediate," he returned. "It is constitutional. Is this the first attack she has had since her marriage? She has had them frequently *before*, I believe."

"I did not know, I had not heard," faltered Sid.

"If they would let her alone and not make such a confounded to-do over her, she would recover in half the time, and there might be some prospect of curing her. That old wiseacre over there contends that it is epilepsy, and, as he is the family physician, of course must have his way. He will drive her into some *real* disease with his soporifics and strong medicines. The less medicine she has, and the less attention too, the better."

Sid edged his way through the swarm of Biddies and Bridgets to the *other* physician, and inquired *his* opinion of the case.

"A dangerous case of epilepsy," he returned, solemnly.

"Is she in danger?"

"In very great danger."

"How, in the name of Heaven, are we to know what to believe? The other physician——"

"Oh, I know!—that fool, Pillsbury, says it's common hysteria, but he knows nothing about it. *I* graduated at the University at Ann Arbor, and I should think ought to know epilepsy when I see it."

The father looked stern when he perceived his son-in-law, the mother furious. In the irate presence of these two elderly people, who looked upon him as little better than a murderer, Sid, in spite of conscious innocence, felt like a condemned criminal. "Hanged if I don't wish I was out of this!" was his mental reflection. His natural imperturbability of countenance was of great advantage here. Apparently without perceiving her relatives, he sat down by Viola and took hold of her wrist. The pulse seemed to be good.

"Viola!" She gave no sign of having heard him. Then Sid put his mouth close to her ear, and whispered, "Come, Viola! none of that! The doctor is laughing at you. He knows very well there's nothing the matter with you. He only wants to run up a bill on your father."

Not a muscle moved.

"Viola, did you know we were invited to tea at Uncle Beckworth's to-morrow evening? And if you are sick we can't go. Come, get up!"

There was a slight quiver of the eyelids, which was about as much of the countenance as was visible.

"I brought you home a handsome new 'Roman tie' for to-morrow evening; and Ophelia, Kingsley, and several others are to be there. I tell you, Viola, you will miss a great deal!"

Viola opened her eyes, and asked faintly to be placed higher on the pillow. Sid moved her carefully. Then she asked for water. He sent a servant for a glass of water, and gave it to her. She only drank a little, Sid holding up her head. "Carter dined with me to-day," he continued in the same low tone, "and the baby

squalled so we gave her your porcelain work-box, and she broke it."

Viola reached out slyly, and gave Sid's moustache a vicious jerk. "You had no business to give it to her," she said in a low tone.

"Make haste and get up, Viola. I have to leave here directly. Your father and mother look as if they wanted to kick me out of the house, *now*."

"Make them all go out of here," she said, in a louder tone.

The room was soon cleared, the bandages removed, the maid called, and Viola dressed and brought into the sitting-room. The learned physicians had taken their departure, and when they called upon the following morning, their patient had returned to her home, and was making preparations for going out that evening. But another nurse had to be procured, the new "Roman tie" bought, and the porcelain work-box mended.

I feel wicked and vicious to-night, John. I have a tremendous inclination to tease and tyrannize over somebody. I should like to quarrel with you, only you have expressed enthusiastic admiration for everything I have said in this chapter, and there is nothing else to quarrel about.

You are too complacent and too good-humored to-night to be amusing; and as I never could see any pleasure in entertaining other people unless I might entertain myself a little at the same time, you can go, John.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE "MAGIC BELL."

THE Beckworth dining-room was a noble apartment. The table for twelve, set in the middle of it, looked diminutive. The paneling was of oak, and a few hunting scenes, in massive gilt frames, hung at regular intervals. The table bristled with cut-glass and silver, and the chandelier above it was wreathed with fragrant flowers.

There was one chair vacant: that was Kingsley's. He seldom went abroad now. He had become morose and ungallant. It was generally supposed that Adele's marriage had something to do with his unsocial humor.

Waiters glided about with stealthy step; the guests satiated their appetites and were happy. Who could possibly find a place for sadness or prayer amid so much luxury and gayety? And yet the mistress of the house, as she sat at the head of her sumptuous table, opposite her accomplished husband, had never before felt her mind driven into a deeper morass of clinging miserable thoughts; and while the others chattered and were gay *she* lifted from a heavy heart the despairing petition, "God, help me to conquer myself, or else take me out of this miserable world!"

And is this lady—so reserved, so stately—the same whom we found, at the beginning of our story, scrawling in the ashes and complaining idly of her dull life? and later, dancing and flirting with the gentlemen, and chatting and laughing gayly with all? Bodily, the same; spiritually, an altogether different person. Those who had formerly borne themselves familiarly and patronizingly toward her now stood aloof in awe; and many who had disregarded and sneered at her now courted her favor. Oh, the power of money and fine clothes!

"Come, Mr. Politician," said Mr. Beckworth, addressing his nephew, who sat silent and *distrait*, "we didn't invite you here to have you studying up speeches for the next caucus."

"The political muse," returned Mr. Waltman, slowly, as if gradually coming out of his reverie, "is a tyrannical mistress. To secure her favor one must give her his whole mind. To be a successful politician, one must unfit himself to be anything else."

"That is true," said Viola. "Since Sid has become a politician he is not much account for anything else. He is hardly ever at home, and when he *is* at home, can think of nothing to say."

"He must be at a loss for something to be interested in," laughed Ripley, "to care so much about that heavy affair going on at Washington."

"I do not think affairs of state and the well-being of the nation are likely to keep Sid 'awake 'o nights,'" said Mr. Beckworth.

"None of us concern ourselves as much on that head as we should," said Dr. Hughes. He had shaken hands with Sid, and that little midnight skirmish, which seemed to have settled all ill-feeling between them, was forgotten.

"You gentlemen boast that this is a free government, conducted by the people," said Mrs. Beckworth. "You read the papers of your party, cast your votes according to *their* representations, and call that *liberty of thought*. Only those who seek notoriety, or large wages for small service, take the trouble to inform themselves in regard to the true state of our political affairs."

"A man who of his own free will wallows in the 'muddy pool of politics' must either be in pursuit of a 'fat office,' or crazy," said Mr. Beckworth.

"How can you expect other than corrupt politics, if you leave the conducting of the government to corrupt men?" returned his wife.

"Strange as it may appear to you, Mrs. Beckworth,"

said Sid, "there are honest and upright men engaged in politics, though the mere name, it seems, is enough to blacken one's character."

"Mrs. Beckworth takes a general view of the subject," returned Mrs. Beckworth's husband. "Women, you must know, my dear nephew, seldom trouble themselves to look beneath the surface of things to see whether all is as fair or as foul as it *appears*. With one sweeping glance they sum up your virtues and your deficiencies, and are ready to uphold or denounce, according to circumstances, with all their strength. Now, my pretty Hypatia, let us see how deep you have skimmed. How would *you* go about cleansing this 'muddy pool of politics'?"

Some of the old fire flashed into Adele's eye as she replied, "I would have the people make themselves a *power*, instead of a tool. I would have them inform themselves thoroughly upon *both* sides of a question, instead of one; and then cast the whole force of their influence, instead of a simple vote, upon the *right* side; not upon the side which would bring most benefit to themselves. I would have the interests of the weak looked into, as well as those of the strong. And one portion of this free country should not be elevated above another, nor its welfare or rights considered more attentively."

"In short, you would have human nature remodeled," added Mr. Beckworth, looking over at his wife with a smile.

"You have as free an opportunity in this matter as any one, Adele," said Ophelia. "The press is open to you, provided your ideas are clear, and your diction free from outrages upon the English language, though the latter point is not much attended to."

"There is but one thing that prevents my entering the political arena," returned Adele: "that is, my political education has been neglected. Would that I had lived in the days of Hypatia or Madame Roland!"

"You live in the days of Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Anna Dickinson," said Ripley; "won't that answer as well?"

"If those ladies could only have the good fortune to get stoned to death or beheaded, it would accomplish more toward their immortalization than any amount of scribbling or proclaiming of their principles from the rostrum," remarked Mr. Beckworth.

"Tut!" cried Viola, slyly appropriating an orange which her neighbor had just peeled, "I see no use in politics. We pay men for attending to these things; why can't they attend to them without bothering other people about it? Why can't they have a school for politics, so that men might go there and complete their education and be done with it?"

"Come," exclaimed Sid, rising, "let's adjourn to the parlor, where Miss Ophelia will harmonize these discords and transport us into sublimer realms upon the downy pinions of the only angel of this earth,—music."

"And we'll look at that new lot of chromos our amiable host was telling us of, and grow sublime under the combined influences of their diversified beauties," said Tom, who, having secured a paying position in some liquor house in the city, was elate and social, and distributed his flowery sentences among the guests with reckless profusion.

"Talk not to me of the elevating influences of beauty," exclaimed the host. "Haven't I seen a gardener, embowered in such wildernesses of balm and bloom as would throw a poet into a delirium of ecstasy, bestowing his tenderest care upon his celery and onions, because they brought him more profit? Moreover, are we fortunate husbands of pretty women in any way superior to our brethren who have ugly wives?"

"The latter argument is conclusive," remarked Sid. And they all defiled out of the dining-room, down the long hall and into the parlors, where they disposed of themselves at random.

Ophelia took her place at the piano; and the company, knowing that the favor would be brief,—for it was Ophelia's happy way to inflict upon her audience no more than three pieces at one time,—was quiet and attentive.

Have you, my attentive audience, ever heard that enchanting reverie, dedicated by Maurice Strakosch to her imperial highness "Olga" (Grand Duchess of Russia and Crown Princess of Wurtemburg), and entitled "The Magic Bell"? If you have not, I pray you hear it as soon as practicable, and only from a skilled performer, and thereby elect me the recipient of your undying gratitude, for having made the suggestion.

Ophelia never played this heavenly melody without a sympathetic vibration of her heart-strings; and now, as her fingers thrided the intricate mazes, her countenance assumed a tender and sorrowful expression. She was conscious that some one entered and stood by her, leaning upon the piano, entranced. Some of the movements she repeated again and again. She had a strange feeling that she was speaking to a kindred soul. At last she looked up; and I doubt not but my wise friend can guess whose eyes she met,—eyes that had haunted her dreams with myriads of inscrutable expressions, but none like that which *now* looked from out their lambent depths.

What a mysterious, incomprehensible being was this! He never looked at or spoke to her without exciting within her a sort of wonder,—so different from all others did he appear to her. They had looked at each other but one forgetful moment, wistful and wondering, when a chorus of inquiries of the why and wherefore of his detention greeted him from all sides, and he turned his attention to the manufacture of clumsy excuses. Cards were produced. Ripley chose Ophelia for his partner in a game of euchre, and managed to monopolize her the remainder of the evening. Ophelia made no effort to prevent it; she had no care

for anything. When Kingsley had turned coldly and discourteously away from her, after a blunt and ungracious greeting, her power of enjoyment was gone. She knew that she was judged wrongfully. An explanation was an utter impossibility; and there was nothing left her but to endure his undeserved scorn as best she might. Nor was it at all probable that there would ever be any better understanding between them. But for all that, she could not help loving him.

It is a mystery how some men who are not good at all, who are even positively bad, so often manage to win the hearts of pious, good women,—women who in purity and simple integrity of heart are so much their superiors. I can suggest no solution to the mystery, unless it is because of woman's superior power of *sympathy*, by which her affections are drawn toward the unfortunate, the unhappy and the erring, rather than the upright and strong, who have no need of their compassion. And yet there must be good, real or imagined, in a character which so attracts. Purity can feel no congeniality with impurity; and real goodness can have no desire for association with vice.

Perhaps Ophelia misjudged Kingsley. His manner was not a smoothly polite one like Sid's. There were forces within him which had grown unfettered to their fullest stature, that would not always "down" at his bidding. And what seemed to her brusqueness might have been simply the lack of self-control.

The party broke up early. Sid was the first to go, though Viola made a violent outcry against it. He had an engagement which it was imperatively necessary for him to meet.

The engagement was a meeting of politicians of the faction which had the honor of claiming Mr. Waltman for a partisan. He had set his heart upon political power,—or, rather, self-aggrandizement through that means,—and he gave up his whole mind to that purpose and aim. He never missed an important meeting;

always kept himself prominent and always in a favorable light; shook off indiscreet friends who were apt to retard his progress by their blunders; secured, by tact and ingenuity, the good-will of all who were likely to further his interests; designedly created enemies of those whose enmity was a recommendation—the notoriously unprincipled; and so masked his crooked and sinuous policy that it presented a fair show to the public.

Sidney Waltman held principles as coin, to be bartered for whatever advancement they would procure him. He had no convictions, or conscientious scruples, to embarrass or retard his progress; and yet so subtle and wary were his movements that his enemies could point to no *positive* wrong he had ever committed. He was a close student, not only of contemporaneous persons and events, but of the *past;* and, from the history of the political career of great statesmen, gleaned his lessons of success and failure.

Scrupulously attentive to his duties,—none too small for serious consideration,—deferential in his deportment toward his elders and superiors, courteous toward his equals and considerate toward his inferiors, he gained rapidly in the esteem of all, lost in none. He won respect, but not love. Though his party were proud of him, and had confidence in his capability and steadfastness, few actually liked him.

In one thing Sid differed from the common politician: he never varied his allegiance. This generally passed for profound and earnest conviction, but it was nothing more nor less than profound policy. Let his party, from any ill chance, go to ruin, and see this constant partisan step aside in time to save himself from the wreck!

But no such mischance was likely to happen. The foundation had been carefully constructed of able and substantial material,—upright and reliable men who made no display, but upheld the structure nevertheless.

Sid's term in the legislature would soon expire, and

his next aim was Congress. But there was a Mordecai in his way; an aggravating person, who not only "bowed not nor did him homage," but steadily kept pace with him on his upward march, and apparently without the same effort.

"I must get rid of him," was Sid's determination. And he set his crafty mind at work to undermine him and bring him to ruin.

Is it not strange that this man could not rest content with his own honors and high position, but must needs go to envying his associates? He wanted to stand alone, without a rival to impede his way or detract from his share of public attention.

But Mordecai was on the alert, and by a skillful manœuvre precipitated his antagonist into the veritable pit he had prepared for *him*. And thus the cap which Sid had prepared for his enemy's head was fitted upon his own.

When I laid down the "keel" of this story, I marked off one chapter for the ventilation of my political opinions, in which I was to astound you, John, with the clearest and profoundest exposition of the "political situation" that it has ever been your good fortune to meet. For this purpose I "crammed" diligently: political economy, proceedings of Congress, presidential messages, and no end of political rag-tag and rubbish. And now that I have reached the designated chapter, don't you think I have forgotten every bit of it? I understood it all very well when I read it, I declare; but when it came to putting this and that together, and deducting wholly new and original conclusions, I found myself utterly at a loss.

However, it may be that politics lie a little farther along in my career, and that some day I may be wanting your vote for something or other.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHO CONQUERS?

A BLEAK evening. The city of L—— looked cold and deserted. Now and then the quick step of some belated tradesman, hurrying home to a bright fire and warm supper, crackled along the pavement. There were no homeless unfortunates to be wandering abroad upon such an evening, for the good city of L—— provides for its poor.

The snow fell in scant flakes; the wind whistled drearily around the street corners; and here and there the lights from comfortable homes streamed across the pavement. A disconsolate figure strolled alone, up one street and down another; glancing idly to the right and to the left,—as if no other sources of amusement remained to a surfeited mind, which would fain seek congeniality in the dreary, the desolate, and the sad. He looked up at the closed houses, whose light and warmth were imprisoned within; at the sickly, feeble lamps, and the few straggling pines in contracted front yards; at the grim trees, posted here and there, clapping their naked limbs, and sighing in the bitter wind; and the bleak sky, with its dim lights;—as if he felt a pleasure in the contemplation of these gloomy objects.

For a moment he paused in the gaudy stream of light pouring from the window of a sleek and prosperous-looking mansion. A woman passed the window, her shadow crossing him,—fair, gentle, and elegantly dressed, — a woman of opulent and luxurious life. With a satirical shrug of his shoulders, as if he jeered at his own thoughts, he moved on: a sudden burst of sweet sounds streamed after. He paused irresolute.

Ah, the haunting, reproachful mournfulness of that "Magic Bell!"

"It is not worth while to trouble myself with making resolutions where *she* is concerned," he muttered, and, turning hastily, he mounted the steps and rang the bell.

He was ushered into a luxurious room, and the lady rose from the piano to meet him. "Do not be interrupted," he said, coldly; "I only came in a moment to hear the music."

She greeted him kindly, though her face flushed slightly at his abrupt speech. Then she returned to her music. He let her play on without interruption or comment. As for himself, he sat coldly distant, listening greedily, but unsatisfied. When she concluded he arose, thanked her, and was gone. She looked after him wistfully. Some of the shadow from his dark face seemed to have fallen upon hers. She resumed her playing, but her fingers moved mechanically, and it was evident that her mind was not in it.

Upon the following evening, when she saw that same dark countenance at the opera, it was full of life and enjoyment, and the sombre eyes flashed bright glances into the blue ones of the fair-haired Louise Benton, and the episode of "The Magic Bell" seemed all a dream. Frequently during the evening Ophelia glanced toward them, but he seemed unaware of her presence.

Another evening, some two or three weeks after, he called. His manner was unusually social and friendly. He had met with some unexpected good fortune, perhaps; and Ophelia thought of Louise Benton with a sigh. He recounted many humorous adventures and occurrences, over which they laughed gayly.

A spirit of mirthfulness—more reckless and wanton than she had ever seen him display—possessed him. He grew more and more familiar; did everything that was admissible, to tease and arouse her indignation, and seemed absolutely to revel in her vexation and

discomfiture. He pulled at her curls to see if they were false; and while Ophelia stood up beneath the full glare of the chandelier, to let him see that they were all her own, he suddenly took hold of her, and, whistling softly a merry waltz, whirled her twice around the room.

"Positively," she commenced; but before she could complete her sentence she was again dragged around the room. Then Ophelia, fairly out of breath, vowed she would call mamma; at which he promised, under conditions that she was not to scold him, to let her go. Standing with his hand upon her waist, waiting for her promise, Kingsley suddenly became aware of some unusual expression in his companion's face. It was not anger, nor fear, nor dislike.

"How you are blushing!" he exclaimed, amazedly. "What is the matter? You are not angry? No,—it is *shame!*"

"You had better go home," she said, gravely. "It is ten o'clock, and mamma don't like young gentlemen to stay later."

He immediately, and stiffly, took his departure. He did not look vexed nor discomfited, only stiff.

"Was I right or wrong?" questioned Ophelia of herself when he had gone. "Am I too severe, too prudish?" (A question frequently debated, no doubt, under similar circumstances.)

She studied it over a full minute. "It was an embrace; nothing more nor less," she exclaimed, at length; "and I was right."

(That is right, Ophelia. Put it in plain terms, and your question will answer itself.)

And yet Ophelia felt oppressed and vaguely unhappy. What was the cause of this singular change in his manner? Had he no longer respect for her? She could not blame him for judging her, as she had appeared, indelicate, light-minded, and inconstant. "I ought to be glad, if he has won the love of so noble a

girl as Louise," she thought; "but I am not." Then she frowned, and called herself a fool! an idiot! Why, of all her lovers, must she love this one? Against her will,—ay, against her prayers; for had she not wearied heaven with petitions for a release from this singular infatuation?—but all in vain.

"I know I have a mind superior to most girls," she mused. "I know that I have a power of attraction not granted to all; but what do I care for such power? The only power I crave is denied me: the power to make good. Why is it, I should like to know, that I am possessed of such intense desire for the good of human souls, without the slightest power to influence them toward it? Who is any the better that I live? Not one soul!"

Kingsley, at that moment, was hard at work upon a paragraph for the daily paper of which he was now a local editor. Pausing to reflect upon a closing sentence, his wandering gaze fell upon an object which entirely diverted his mind from the matter in hand. A rippling thread of gold shimmered down his coat-sleeve. He gathered it up between his thumb and finger, and held it toward the light.

Do not laugh, John. Is there not one single yellow hair of Lucrezia Borgia's upon exhibition to the world, in the Ambrosian Library at Milan? Was there not a war about a rose? and another about a key? And surely our lover may be excused if he felt an imbecile desire to kiss and to fondle this infinitesimal portion of his mistress. When he had performed a few ecstatics over it, he wound the slender thread about his finger. But no sooner had he loosened his hold than it hurriedly unwound itself and flew back into its own original waves.

"Stubborn!" he exclaimed, with a smile; "wants its own way! But we will see who conquers."

He bound it upon his finger again, and, fastening the end securely, resumed his writing. As he concluded

his manuscript, a mysterious individual stood at his elbow, ready to spirit it away. This, I presume, was the printer's devil.

When he had vanished, silently and solemnly, as befitted so mysterious a personage, Kingsley resumed his pen, and wrote until far into the night. Apparently he had forgotten the little ring of gold upon his finger. But, no; before retiring, he looked at it long and earnestly, as if he thought there might be some hidden expression contained in it; and the first thing upon the following morning he unwound it, and held up a fairy ringlet, describing the circuit of his finger.

"And so," he reflected, "I will conquer her stubborn spirit and subdue her will to mine, until she shall know no pleasure, no desire, no law outside of my will. She must live, move, and have her being only in my love. I will so encompass, surround, and overwhelm her with the thought of me, that she shall find no rest beyond the pale of my love. She inhabits my dreams, she encroaches upon my business hours, she consumes my leisure in reveries, and, by heaven! I will not remain alone in bondage. I will set such a thrilling among her steady, sober pulses as shall startle her out of her cold reserve, and instill into her frozen nature new life, which shall throb on, henceforth and forever."

Did he reflect that, to secure an eternal union of souls, the bondage must be mutual? And, mark you, the little ringlet had made a deep indenture upon his finger, which will continue for as long a space as its constrained circles.

Had he forgotten his voluntary promise to the good old gentleman, her father, a couple of seasons ago? No; neither had he forgotten a certain enlivening scene, viewed through a carriage window upon a rainy day. Her nature was as a pliant piece of wax, awaiting the moulder's hands. Why not *his* as well as Ripley's or any other person's? She would never love Ripley,—of that he was certain, even though she

should marry him. And he felt equally certain that she could love *him;* that she found it a hard task to prevent it, in fact. A genuine attachment could not but be beneficial to her in arousing into being latent capacities of soul, which otherwise might remain forever dormant. And then the heroism in self-abnegation and self-conquest which an unfortunate attachment would call forth! Was there any beauty, or nobility, in an easy, untried life? No; and so with this heterodoxical process of reasoning (whether sophistical or not, you, John, can judge better than I) Mr. Kingsley decided his own fate and that of the gentle Ophelia.

"Sometimes," says the unfortunate Troilus,—

> "We are devils to ourselves
> When we will tempt the frailty of our powers,
> Presuming on their changeful potency."

It is a little strange, too, that he should not hesitate to subject the tender, loved one, whom to expose to the rude cares of poverty he considered almost inhuman, to the far more terrible trial—one that has wrecked many a poor soul—of forbidden passion.

The fact is, suspicion had demoralized him. He began to doubt if she were really the noble creature he had fancied her. And to doubt those we love turns this world into chaos. Had he been deceived in her character and disposition? He determined to know.

At breakfast that morning he sat by the bright-eyed seamstress, Miss Moffit, who at present is *let* to that stout, showy brunette with a couple of diamond rings on her finger. Mrs. Diable's select boarding-house is *very* select,—that is, *expensive*,—and a seamstress could not have found her way into its sacred precincts save in her professional capacity.

The stout brunette, who speaks in a loud tone and with an air of command, and her husband, who lounges through the day, and disappears from the view of re-

spectable society at night, pay their bills promptly and are considered select at Mrs. Diable's; whereas the bright-eyed seamstress cuts and bastes and sews, and "settles" her bill with making Mrs. Diable's dresses, and is considered scarcely worth speaking to. This morning the dashing brunette swallows her breakfast in haste, that she may accomplish a little shopping before her lord awakes. He must have been unusually oblivious this morning, when, in the dull, gray light of the early day, he repaired to his sleeping apartment, or he would never have forgotten to dispose of his pocket-book in a less accessible place than his breeches pocket,—in consequence of which he will wake to curse himself for a brainless fool with an empty pocket, and find his dashing wife with a new dress in the process of making up for the next ball.

"Are you sufficiently supplied with employment, Miss Moffit?" said Kingsley to his bright-eyed neighbor.

The little dress-maker, who so seldom met with a disinterested civility in this genteel boarding-house as to be somewhat suspicious of such attentions, turned a keenly inquisitive glance upon her interlocutor.

"Because, if you are not," he continued, without waiting for a reply, "I can direct you to a lady who, if she has no work for you herself, will be delighted at an opportunity to render a service to some one, and I have no doubt can procure for you all the employment you would desire, and consider it a favor to herself, or I am mistaken in her."

"What is the lady's name?" inquired Miss Moffit.

He took a card from his pocket, and writing Ophelia's address, handed it to the little dress-maker.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, brightening. "I know her! At least, I've heard of her."

"She is a pious young lady," said Kingsley, with a smile, "and rejoices in doing good unto others. I think that you had better not mention that I had anything to do with your coming, for I suspect it would be

no recommendation to you in her eyes, as she considers me an unrighteous heathen, a Babylonian, from whom could emanate no good."

"Thank you, sir. I do need work; and when I am through here I will call on Miss Berges," said Miss Moffit, gratefully.

Here was disinterested kindness! Here was a neighborly service with no selfish expectation of a return, and not the first either! Here was a good Samaritan indeed!—a lamb in wolf's clothing!

The following week found Miss Moffit engaged upon an elegant piece of embroidery for Mrs. Berges, at five dollars a week. Mrs. Berges was shrewd and close at a bargain. The work was a silken counterpane; flowers in their natural colors upon a dark stone-colored ground.

Ophelia liked the sensible little seamstress, and treated her as if she were a guest. They chatted and laughed together as familiarly and merrily as old acquaintances. One day Miss Moffit thoughtlessly mentioned Mr. Kingsley.

"Mr. Kingsley!" exclaimed Ophelia, looking slightly surprised. "Do you know him?"

"I merely know him," she returned, "but have no acquaintance with him. He boards at Mrs. Diable's, where I occasionally get work."

Now was the time for repaying, in a measure, his kindness, thought Miss Moffit. And so she related how one evening, when she had chanced to be unavoidably detained very late at Mrs. Diable's, he had accompanied her home, though he had declined going to a concert with one of the boarders who had offered him a ticket, upon the plea that he had work to do.

"And so perfectly polite was his manner that no one could have told but that he was highly pleased and felt himself honored by having my company. He is not one of those gentlemen who are polite to those of their own circle or their superiors, and rude to all whom they consider beneath them. If there is any

difference in Mr. Kingsley, he is more considerate of the feelings of his inferiors."

The room was warm, and as Ophelia stitched diligently upon her embroidery a deeper color mounted to her cheek. "When was that, did you say?" she inquired carelessly.

"Let me see. It was in the spring, for I remember that I had on my scarf and my winter hat; I hadn't got my new one yet."

Ophelia smiled, nodded her head, and changed the subject. She had discovered Viola's black-eyed girl, who was of such low standing.

When Miss Moffit returned to Mrs. Diable's "select boarding-house" for the purpose of assisting some of the "select boarders" into a fashionable appearance, she resumed her old place at the table, next to Kingsley.

"By the way," he said, having devoured his supper in unusual haste and pushed back his plate, "did you call on Miss Berges? and how did you like her?"

"Yes, I spent several weeks there, and I liked her very much," returned Miss Moffit. "It is true what I have heard spoken of her: she is as near perfection as people in this world can possibly be. The sweetest, kindest creature I ever saw."

Kingsley's eyes were fixed upon his plate, and it was impossible to see what was in them. And yet she had an idea that he was disappointed or displeased.

"I am very glad that I mentioned her to you," he said, rising. "She may be of great service to you."

He looked disappointed and unhappy, indeed, as he hurried out into the street. He roved about the streets, struggling with himself. "I will crucify myself!" he exclaimed, at length. "I will sacrifice my own life and save hers; for prohibited love is madness! But I *must* see her once more."

They were entirely alone: no one in the handsome apartment but themselves,—the world shut out. The tall, gracious figure, the gentle air, the clear, soft eyes

with the wondrous changes in them, and the graceful head wreathed with a crown of dusky gold; in all his life, however long, he had never met, nor could ever meet, with a picture which moved him like this. Was there any reason why he should not note it earnestly and fix its every feature unalterably in his memory? Was not the beauty of this world lent us to gladden our hearts, and to remind us of another world, where all things are beautiful?

But there was no gladness in Kingsley's heart as he looked. Her beauty smote upon him with a heavy sense of depression. He had come, he told her, to bid her good-by. His life here was growing monotonous. He wanted to see the world. One little corner of it did not content him. His tastes were cosmopolitan; and he felt himself more suited to extended plains and wild jungles than to a city life. The social manacles were beginning to gall. He longed for a life of freedom from conventional restraints.

How very cold and stately Ophelia seemed! She looked preoccupied, as if she had scarcely heard what he was saying, and made neither inquiry nor comment. Had she *no* feeling for him? Did she not care *what* became of him? As Kingsley looked at her, his heart sank heavier and heavier under the depressing influence of her impenetrable, chilling presence.

Oh, that dumb tongue of hers! She could say nothing. Her heart was benumbed with chilling fears and regrets,—unavailing regrets, and fears for the eternal safety of his soul. But they only welled up from unknown depths of silence, and then recoiled upon themselves. Oh, the untold anguish of feelings forever locked within an unutterable deep! She could say nothing. Even her *look* was reserved.

He arose, took her hand, and said his brief farewell without looking at her. A look sometimes tells more than many words, and the multitude of emotions imprisoned within might prove too strong for the

guard he had put upon them, under the magic influence of hers. A serious but cool farewell, and he was gone.

Gone! For a moment she stood motionless, as if stunned. Then she hurried out into the darkness and threw herself upon the ground with a bitter cry, "My God! my Father! speak to him! I cannot!"

Do not sneer at this speech, John, until you have analyzed it, and have pondered upon the nature of that terrible, inexorable Voice which she invoked.

Down in the dust in her velvet and satin the stately woman groveled. Costly apparel were but rags in the sight of Him whose voice maketh nations afraid; who laid the foundation of the earth and shut up the door of the sea; who accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor.

How those tame people who have never felt a pang beyond the fear of physical pain or loss would have wondered to witness such an ecstasy of grief from such a cause! She had a luxurious home, was richly clothed and fed; why should she moan? Others had lost their loved ones forever, and were happy after; why not she?

Know, O materialist, that the power of human suffering is as varied as the human countenance; that its magnitude differs in individuals as widely as the magnitude of intellects differs. The snail, no doubt, suffers little. Put your foot upon it, and it is dead. Other creatures, however, die hard, and with excruciating pain. In like measure, affection in some is crushed out of existence with one blow, while in others it struggles and suffers, and wrestles against the power which seeks to destroy; and oftentimes conquers and lives.

The wind moaned amid the bare branches and tangled vines above her. And when she had poured out her cumbrous anguish to Him "who performeth what his soul desireth," she arose from the ground and went into the house. Sitting by her lonely fire, she contem-

plated her wrecked life—for it *was* wrecked, and the fragments of her hope-freighted bark floated away out of her sight—without a sigh or moan. Perhaps, as Ariosto imagined, there may be a limbo in the heavenly regions for things lost upon this earth; and the love which is poured out at an unworthy shrine, and all the sweet and pure emotions, hidden, hidden,—because there is none to loose them from their prison,—are not forever lost!

She was weak as yet,—the burden of her grief was new,—and her thoughts roved after him; but not so weak that she did not struggle with her infirmity. She had entered upon an important portion of her life. Her mind had come to maturity; her principles were fixed, and no longer the play of idle winds. Had all her past—of strength, of hope, of tenderness—but tended to this hollow, vacant sea, impoverishing her life, and giving nothing in return? "Now is life over," was the secret belief of her heart. All her labor, all her unwearied watch-care and earnest endeavor to make it noble, to preserve it pure, for this! She remembered the poor prisoner who delved patiently, night by night, in the hope of at last finding his way into freedom and light, until he suddenly came to a stream which rushed in and overwhelmed him.

She had thought herself strong, but she had only to be tried to prove how worthless was her boasted strength. The bells tolled twelve. She opened her window and looked up at the sky in wonder. How gray and wan! She, too, felt gray and wan.

You recognize the real sublimity of this character, John? You understand how this strong capability of feeling, which is usually mistaken for an indication of weakness, is in reality possible only to the strong?

"Minds that are impassioned on a more colossal scale than ordinary," says a great writer, "deeper in their vibrations, and more extensive in the scale of

their vibrations, whether in other parts of their intellectual system they had or had not a corresponding compass, will tremble to greater depths from a powerful convulsion, and will come round by a longer curve of undulations."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LIFE-LIKE STATUE.

ALTHOUGH Ophelia and Adele were as true friends as ever, a distinct change marked their intercourse,—a formal reserve which neither tried to break. Each hid her real thoughts from the other, and affected a content which neither felt.

One afternoon in the early spring, Ophelia, making her usual weekly call upon her friend, and not finding her in the sitting-room, was directed by the servant to a private boudoir. The mistress of the house was still in her morning *négligé* of white cashmere with pink trimmings, and her hair hung in graceful disorder about her shoulders.

"My head ached," she apologized, "and I couldn't bear to have it touched. I'll have it attended to presently, and look like a civilized being; though it is not likely I'll ever be anything but a wild savage. Wild wood plants seldom flourish transplanted into gardens and parterres. I used to think this sort of life would make me happy, but I pine for the woods and hills and streams."

"The life you are leading is dissipated," returned Ophelia. "I do not wonder that you tire,—crowding enough pleasure for a lifetime into one short season. Too much enjoyment is as unwholesome as too little."

"Suppose there is no enjoyment in it?"

"Then it is so much the worse for you. It is like crowding with sweetmeats a reluctant stomach, to use a homely comparison!"

"I was not out last night; though it matters little whether I am *in* or *out*, I sleep so little."

"I thought you were going to the concert."

"I had a headache, and did not care to go. Mr. Beckworth stopped on his way to his club, but pronounced it a bore."

"Of what club is he a member?"

"I have never inquired. Not a literary club, though: ten-pins, billiards, seven-up, and suppers; a club to help away with the vacant hours of this interminable life."

"What a lovely room, Adele!" exclaimed Ophelia, gazing admiringly around the elegant apartment, in which the prevailing color was sea-green, the paneling of white and gilt.

"Yes," said Adele, coldly. "Mr. Beckworth has exquisite taste."

It had become as an old story to her. She no longer derived any pleasure from its beauty,—not even when attested by the admiration of her friends.

Ophelia arose, and approaching curiously a window embrasure heavily veiled in rich lace curtains, parted the drapery, and looking in, gave an exclamation of surprise and delight.

"Why had you not told me of this, Adele? I have never before seen so beautiful, so magnificent a piece of statuary! How long have you had it, and whose work is it?"

It was indeed a magnificent life-size statue of Adele. The shoulders and arms were bare, and the whole figure distinctly outlined through the scant drapery. The head was uplifted proudly, the attitude free and unstudied. The figure, the attitude, the expression were simple; yet how noble! It might have been

Cordelia, the heroic daughter of King Lear, receiving her condemnation and offcasting with a proud patience which betokened a strong sense of her father's injustice, at the same time tempered by the consciousness of her own integrity.

"We only received it two days ago. It was executed while we were in Baltimore. It has been solicited for exhibition; but it shall never be removed from that sheltered corner with my consent."

As Ophelia stood silently contemplating the marvelous work of art, she heard the door open softly and some one enter. Adele, who sat staring musingly into the grate, did not look around; but Ophelia turned, expecting to see one of the servants, or her friend's husband. What was her surprise to see Sid Waltman enter the room as easily and familiarly as if entering a private apartment of his own.

At first he did not observe Ophelia; and the light which sprang into his eye, and the soft animation which overspread his whole countenance, startled her into momentary silence.

He advanced quietly, and wheeling up an easy-chair beside the mistress of the house, bent forward, and, looking into her eyes, exclaimed,—

"What is it that so occupies the thoughts of my reverend aunt, that she is quite oblivious of all surroundings,—even the approach of her graceless but devoted nephew?"

Mrs. Beckworth started violently, and turned upon her visitor a changeful countenance. Perhaps there was a look of warning in her eye, for he immediately looked up, and bowed in a pleasant, unembarrassed way to Ophelia.

"Ah! you are admiring Hebe?" He entered the embrasure and stood beside her, contemplating the statue. "It is like life," he continued, touching the shoulder softly with his finger. "Cold and hard like the original. It stands sublimely indifferent to the weak-

nesses of human nature, of which it has no taint; inexorable, unbending, and chill. The artist plainly loved his task. Look at the faint tracery of veins in the delicate feet."

"Come away!" exclaimed Mrs. Beckworth, a little petulantly. "If I could have my wish, it should never see the light of day."

"It is an execrable piece of work!" exclaimed Sid, with extreme gravity. "It is a base counterfeit, a miserable parody upon the incomparable original. It——"

"Do hush!" returned the "incomparable original," laughing. "You know I did not object to its being stared at upon that account."

Sid inspected her countenance a moment with a searching eye. "Mere physical beauty," he resumed,—"the prettiness of faultless features and rounded limbs,—is an object for scorn, unless accompanied with intellectual beauty."

"You mean spiritual," suggested Ophelia. "Intellect unaccompanied by moral qualities is no more worthy of admiration than mere material beauty alone."

"Tut!" cried Adele. "People talk one way and think another. Mr. Waltman married a beauty without hesitating to inquire into her intellectual resources, and Miss Berges knows in her own heart that she adores a certain personage of great intellectual powers whose morality is exceedingly questionable."

"Really, I think your assertion needs some sort of a support," returned Ophelia, smiling a little constrainedly.

"I assert upon authority of my own eyes. I am only *partially* blind, Ophelia."

"She blushes!" exclaimed Sid. "Is it possible? All honor to the knight who has mastered the strong citadel of this inaccessible princess's affections. Was the siege stormy and brief? or was it a steady and

protracted one? I should like to know, for the sake of science."

"It was neither," returned Adele, whose face expressed mischief. "The master was known and recognized immediately, and the bolts and bars of course began to fly back at once, at his first request for admittance."

"You hold some grudge against me, I suppose," was Ophelia's brief comment, as if excusing to herself Adele's infidelity.

"Who can it be?—angel or demon?—you saintly paragons sometimes develop incomprehensible tastes, —or a clever admixture of both?"

"A great deal of both," returned Adele. "His general manner has the beaming benignity of a sunny day in spring; and yet in moments of passion he is like a whirlwind."

"Kingsley, I should say: the description suits him; only *he* is bespoke. He is to be married, I hear, soon after his return from Cuba and South America, to Miss Louise Benton."

"Kingsley, indeed!" cried Adele. "As if you had forgotten that Kingsley was *my* lover!"

She had caught the startled look which, for one instant, rested upon Ophelia's countenance, and then was gone; and the firm compression of her lips which arrested a momentary tremulousness.

"I thought so at one time," returned Sid, "but, as you say, I was only *partially* blind, and finally ascertained my mistake."

"And, may I ask, why *partially* blind?" inquired Ophelia.

"Though we used the same words, it was with entirely different meanings," returned Adele, briskly. "I meant that I was blind only to my own interests; he meant that he was blind to everything but his own interests."

"By the way," said Mr. Waltman, rising, "where

is my honored uncle? I was sent in haste for him an hour ago."

"Haste indeed!" exclaimed his "honored uncle," coming forward. "Do you know that everything is waiting on you? A grand politician you! While the assembly awaits anxiously your important presence, you are entertaining yourself in a lady's boudoir. Fortunately, I knew your weakness, and came straight here." Although he brought his hand down heavily upon his nephew's shoulder, as if he would be very rough with him, there was an indulgent smile upon Mr. Beckworth's face.

Sid arose leisurely, made a few complimentary remarks to the ladies, and then departed in company with his uncle.

"You see, Ophelia," said Adele, looking kindly at her friend, "I have discovered your secret. You confided in me only *partially*, and now it is best that you should trust me *wholly*, for your own sake. A secret grief cankers the heart that holds it, and sometimes ruins a whole life. Olivia, you know,

> "Never told her love,
> But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
> Feed on her damask cheek,'

and finally more disastrous consequences befell. There is no wrong in love, even though it be misplaced. De Quincey expresses profound reverence for the person of whom it could be said that he had been once, and once only,—for more, he declares, argues unsoundness in the passion,—been desperately in love. 'Great passions,' he says '(do not understand me as though I meant great appetites),—passions moving in a great orbit and transcending little regards, are always arguments of some latent nobility. Few are capable of great passions, or (properly speaking) passions at all.' I know your nature, and I know if anything takes hold of you *at all*, it takes hold *deep*. Love does not stop to debate

whether the object be worthy or not; whether he be capable of repaying in like measure, or, if capable, *willing*. There is no barter in it. It is a full, free gift; and it is seldom, very seldom, I doubt not, that it receives full recompense; and yet, for all that, I regret not my love, though I receive nothing but condemnation for it. Ophelia, I have sorely needed your sympathy of late; but you held so coldly aloof I was afraid."

"You don't mean to say, Adele, that you still love Sid Waltman?"

"Yes, my pious friend,—though I know I shock you by the confession,—I still love Sid Waltman, and shall ever continue to love him. Oh, it is awful, I know,"—discerning signs of censure in her friend's countenance,—"I will not try to defend myself. But do not shut me out from your sympathy; for I swear, Ophelia, that I stand in great need of it."

"You have your husband," suggested Ophelia, with slight reproof in her tone.

Adele's face hardened.

"My husband! Is it impossible ever to get away from that thought?—to be obliged to chant the praises of my incomparable lord and master from morn till night,—oh, it is insufferably wearisome!"

"No one compelled you to marry him, Adele."

"No, but I was honest with him. I told him how it was, and he sneered at the idea of a woman's love outlasting a phase of the moon. He gave me leave to love Sid as long and as hard as ever I could. I was beneath the feet of my enemies, and here was an opportunity to mount above them. You know my disposition and my pride. I could not remain a scoff and a by-word, with such an opportunity in my hand, from any dainty scruples about love. I have a great admiration for my husband; otherwise, I could not have married him. My *love* would be an annoyance to him. I am no companion to him. Our tastes run in widely different channels. I am simply a possession, prized

as any other chattel, according to my merits, my power of pleasing. Oh, if I had no heart! If I could only rest content with this tame, lukewarm, commonplace attachment! But I cannot,—I hate it,—and I hate this empty, mocking life we are living. If I could *only* be strong like you, Ophelia, and content like you! Where do you get it?"

"The little content I have the word of God teaches me, and for the rest I trust."

Adele turned away with a sigh. "That tiresome word of God!"

"Adele, I want one promise from you," said Ophelia, as she arose to go.

"Well, *cara mia*, what is it?" With some of her old humor she set her head upon one side, and struck a comical attitude of humble attention.

"That you will shun Sid Waltman."

"Shun him, Ophelia!" she exclaimed, immediately turning grave. "That would be tantamount to confessing myself *afraid* of him, and I am not quite such a fool as that."

"Better that, than any trouble should arise from your continued intimacy. Viola is of a very jealous disposition, and would hesitate at nothing if provoked."

"Viola!" returned the other, thoughtfully. "I had not once thought of her. She seems so incapable of any feeling but vanity."

"She is capable of a great many and very violent feelings, and jealousy is one of them. She is a woman who wouldn't scruple to do any injury to a person whom she disliked."

Adele said she would think about it, but gave no positive promise. "But you have told me nothing about Kingsley."

"You are positive it is Kingsley," returned Ophelia, arching her slender brows. "I will tell you about *my love* another time. I do not feel entirely equal to the task this evening."

She smiled and tossed her head as if casting care to the winds, and there was the old placid expression, with which she masked everything, upon her face, as she went off down the street.

Some weeks passed, perhaps a month, after this, and Ophelia, looking out of the sitting-room window, saw Hal Ripley coming quickly up the walk. It was nothing unusual for Mr. Ripley to call, at any hour in the day; but his general gait was that of a man of elegant leisure, and Ophelia naturally supposed that he must have something unusual on his mind. He saw the look of expectation on her face as he entered.

"Had you heard?" he inquired.

"Heard what?"

"That Viola Waltman is dead! Died this morning at five o'clock."

"Dead!" exclaimed Ophelia, dropping her work. "I had not even heard that she was sick. Why, she was at the ball night before last."

"Yes, she was at the ball," returned Hal in an ominous tone, "and so were her husband and Mrs. Beckworth, who are slightly concerned in this matter."

"What do you mean, Hal?" cried Ophelia, in vague alarm.

"Do you remember that Mr. Waltman and your friend waltzed and danced together the whole evening, and that there was much scandalous talk about it?"

"Yes; it was imprudent in Adele, but she was aggravated at the silly talk, and kept up a pretense of flirtation,—which every one knew was innocent,—from sheer defiance. And Mr. Beckworth was equally as devoted to Viola. But I don't see what that has to do with her sudden death."

"It seems that Mrs. Waltman was subject to hysteria, and was in the habit of taking chloroform, morphia, and other strong drugs, upon such occasions. This time she over-dosed herself, and the physicians found it impossible to arouse her. Violent excitement was the

cause of the attack. She had quarreled with her husband about his proceedings at the ball, and had left him and gone over to her parents, to whom she related her troubles, and they encouraged her violent resentment! Her mother raves like a maniac, and publicly accuses her son-in-law and Mrs. Beckworth of murdering her daughter."

"Poor, wretched woman! She herself is to blame. She never taught her child the least self-control. When Viola gave way to her violent temper, she let her have whatever she desired, and thus encouraged her in it. Viola could never have been a happy woman, under any circumstances, because she had never been taught how to endure the ills of this life or how to lessen them."

When Mr. Ripley had gone, Ophelia went to Adele. She found her friend in a stormy mood, walking from wall to wall, with dry eyes and a pallid face, which looked as if storms had passed over it.

"I was just wishing for you," she said. "If it wasn't for you, Ophelia, I think I should die. The one sole thing that I have to be thankful for in this life is, that I have had your precious love to comfort me through all."

"I hope you are not going to blame yourself, Adele, for what has occurred? You had no more to do with Viola's violent temper, which was the real cause of this trouble, than if you had not been at the ball."

"Poor Viola! poor, spoiled child!—I wonder what has become of her soul, Ophelia? She was not a Christian."

"Oh, I cannot say, Adele. It is not for us to decide."

"Is there no promise that might include her?"

"'Where little is given, little is required,'—that is all I can think of, Adele."

"I hope *that* will save her, and yet I fear. I have never feared before. This is an *awful* life, Ophelia! And yet so small a thing can end it! Is it not strange

that a pinch of arsenic, or a little chloroform, should have the power to send a soul to judgment?"

"My life will be a short one," she resumed, after a moment of gloomy thought. "The raging torrent soon reaches its end, and turbulent natures soon lash themselves into death's abyss. If I could only *die out*, and be no more! for to exist, in any form, must be misery to such stormy spirits as mine. Your calm nature, Ophelia, cannot conceive of the agony I sometimes have to endure."

"You are very wrong, Adele, to yield yourself to such fits of passion. It is a great injury to you."

"Such wild passions were never intended for control. They are like devastating storms, which come to destroy, and leave behind only ruin and desolation."

"You have much to be thankful for, Adele; you have a beautiful home, and a kind, indulgent husband."

Adele shook her head. "My marriage was a mistake. I thought love could be studied and learned as a lesson. But I find that respect is respect, that love is love, and neither can be changed into the other. Apart, we admired each other, and in friendly association felt no jar; brought into closer relations, natural and unalterable attractions and antipathies grate upon each other, and force us apart, whether we will or no. The present epoch of my life is long past with *him*. We live in different periods. Our whole natures, our sympathies, our tastes, are differently constructed. With every desire to love each other, and thus harmonize these discordances, we find inexorable impediments holding us apart. We have a friendly regard for and utmost confidence in each other, and nothing further is attainable. I am tired of this ceaseless striving which can never result in anything. I am tired of this chilly, chilly life, and am ready to give it up and be disposed of according to the Almighty's will."

I am sorrowful to-night, John. I know not where-

fore, unless it is because the winds—in whose hoarse voice I detect a formidable and threatening tone—keep up a gloomy monologue about my window, and prophetic shadows gather upon the lawn, thus banishing from my thoughts all light and sportive fancies. You are listening, John, and a shade of gloomy anticipation overclouds your countenance.

CHAPTER XXIV.

INFINITUDE.

SID placed his child with a clever, honest family in the country, who had been recommended by Mrs. Berges, and went back to his old rooms in the hotel. He had come to a final understanding with his wife's relatives. They might visit their grandchild as often as they wished; but the child was *his*, and he preferred to support her himself. They gave her up the more readily, perhaps, because she was so thoroughly a Waltman; and yet they had no other near relative, and she was Viola's child, after all.

And so the old lady calmed down, and the old gentleman made his will and bequeathed her *half* his fortune, to which Sid consented with the air of one conferring a favor; and now, unshackled and free, he gave himself up more thoroughly to his ambitious political schemes. He seldom met Adele now; he shunned her, for there was an impassable barrier between them.

The *last time he saw her*,—how little either of them thought it the last!—she was standing upon the broad steps of her own home. Her carriage stood at the gate. She had paused to give some parting injunction to the servant, but, upon perceiving Sid, turned

quickly and hastened to enter, her rich velvet train sweeping the pavement as she crossed.

Adele had always a grand appearance. United with her physical magnificence was an imperial air which overshadowed even the richness and grandeur of her attire. She looked, and carried herself, like royalty. There was no more assumption in her manner than there was in her beauty. It was all her own natural and inherited possession, and she could not have looked or acted otherwise without assuming a part. It was the queen of the conservatory, who could never have been other than what she was,—queen of all the flowers, no matter where she grew.

If she had been, in reality, a heathen goddess, and Sid one of her idolatrous devotees, he could never have felt a stronger impulse to kneel at her feet and worship her. But she was only a woman, whom Sid had it once in his power to make the "angel of his fireside," and would not, because he preferred gold and the praise of men. He had but little of either now, and *she* was beyond his reach. In all his after-life it is not likely that he ever forgot the sudden passion of frenzied regret which seized upon him at that moment, and made him curse himself because of the past, the shameful past!

Possibly she read his thoughts, for the old, ironical smile crossed her face as she returned his bow and rolled away in her handsome carriage.

By this time every one had forgotten Viola, and as Mrs. Beckworth pursued her usual habits of gayety, the nine days' scandal died a natural death.

How shocked was the crowd of which she was the brilliant centre, when suddenly it was announced that their beautiful favorite was dying. "What life, what vitality!" they exclaimed. Many refused to believe it, until she would strip up her sleeve and show them the once-rounded arm so emaciate and shriveled that they involuntarily shrank back in horror.

"My death," she said, "will have more effect than my life. It may startle some—who are as vain and frivolous as I have been—into serious thought. Who had a fairer promise of life than I? And yet here, in the midst of my enjoyments, I am suddenly called to give an account of my worthless life. Nothing have I ever accomplished toward the saving of my soul, and much toward damaging it. I sought ease and pleasure, but an invincible power rose up and opposed my will at every point,—a power that was not to be set aside."

"Should you like a priest or minister?" her husband inquired, when he discovered that there was no longer any hope.

"You may send for Father B——," she replied. "He is a good old man, and my poor mother would be frantic if she heard that I had died without confession and the sacrament."

"Shall I send for your relatives?"

"Oh, no! Let them stay where they are; no use in troubling them unnecessarily. That I have you, my kind husband, and my faithful friend Ophelia, satisfies me."

After confessing, and receiving the sacrament, she grew rapidly worse. For a whole night and day bodily pain kept her oblivious of everything else. When at length there was a lull, she sank into a heavy slumber. From this she awoke with a cry, and tossing her hands wildly above her head looked as if horror-struck.

"What is it, Adele?" Ophelia leaned over her, smoothing the white forehead that was furrowed with a frown.

"Is he forever lost? Will nothing, *nothing* save him? Oh, my friend, will not you try to lead his mind to better things? Pray for him and with him. He will think more seriously of the life to come when I am gone."

"Who, Adele? Your husband?"

"Sidney," she murmured. "I had a vision—oh, an awful vision!—of his doom. His spirit wore the same form as in life. He wandered, weary and travel-worn, over the earth, in constant but hopeless search for something, I know not what. I caught glimpses of him now and then, but he never looked to the right nor to the left. I got hold of him at last, and asked if he was happy. He looked at me then,—ah, I have never seen such a face!—it was the look of the eternally lost! He would give me no answer until I entreated him to let me know how it fared with his soul. Then his only reply was to drop on his knees, and, lifting his hands toward heaven, exclaim, 'Oh, God! I, who must henceforth live without hope, acknowledge that my punishment is just.' Ophelia, there is nothing in hell or upon this earth more awful than a human face entirely and eternally bereft of hope! All traces of gentle or pleasing emotions forever obliterated, and one unalterable expression of uncomplaining and hopeless misery fixed eternally upon it! Oh, nothing but the human countenance can express eternity of despair! The damned, who in this life have steeped their souls in lethargy by continued selfish indulgence, awake in eternity and see the justice of their punishment. Oh, what is to become of the souls of those ministers who teach that there is no punishment for souls hereafter, when God so expressly declares there is? I know very little of the Bible, but I have read it of late, and have prayed, as only a soul who recognizes that it is about to enter upon eternity *could* pray, and I have a hope that he has heard my prayer. Whatever fate he allots me, I will feel that it is just; for I deserve nothing but punishment. How much better it is to 'endure affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season!' Christ suffered and died, not that we might live in ease and then be saved. He only cleared a strait and narrow road by which each and every one is entreated to enter into eternal happi-

ness. Woe to the preachers who teach men that, no matter what road we take, all will enter the same place and inherit alike!"

She closed her eyes, and sank into a gentle slumber from which she again awoke with a look of terror. "Oh, God!" she exclaimed, "if I am saved, it will only be because of thy great mercy, for I have done nothing to merit salvation at thy hand! Oh, Ophelia, make friends with God, that you may not find it so hard to have faith in his mercy when you lie here."

"Do not be afraid, Adele," said Ophelia, as calmly and mildly as if she spoke to a frightened child. "*None* of us have done anything to merit his loving compassion; but he has promised, if we truly repent and yield our souls into his hands, that he will save us. You must *believe* in him, Adele."

"I *do* believe, and I am not afraid," spoke the dying voice, already changed: "I am glad that I was made to suffer. It was his hand that I felt pressed so heavily upon me: therefore I am content; for to be touched by the hand of God, even in affliction, is to be sanctified and blessed. Remember your promise, Ophelia!"

She held out her hand to her husband. "Promise me that I shall see you again! This life is important only that it decides how we shall spend the eternity:—*in that* it is of awful, awful importance. Promise me that, when I am gone, you will consider these things."

"I do consider them, Adele," he returned, "and I promise to give more serious heed henceforth. My life has been, for the most part, bitter; but little of it remains, and I willingly offer it as a sacrifice and atonement for the wasted past. If God will receive this remnant, I give it freely into his hands."

"It will be hard for you to change your ways," she said, "but the feeling that you have the approval of God will be a recompense."

When she had said this she bade all present farewell,

and then, without another moan, her spirit passed away.

> "Partings, claspings, sob and moan,
> Midnight waking, twilight weeping,
> Heavy noontide—all are done!"

The storm-tossed spirit at last had found rest,

> "Where no shadow shall bewilder;
> Where life's vain parade is o'er;
> Where the sleep of sin is broken,
> And the dreamer dreams no more!"

And the man for whom the departing soul grieved,—what of him?

"I have just heard that Mrs. Beckworth is dead."

"Yes, sir, she died last night at twelve o'clock."

"She was a very beautiful woman, but I suppose death has robbed her of all her beauty?" Sid did not look up as he put this question to Mrs. Hinton,—his *vis-à-vis* at the hotel table; but as he awaited her answer, a chill crept through all his veins, and his heart seemed to have suspended its beating. If the beauty had departed, it would no longer be Adele, and he could never see her again upon this earth,—perhaps never, anywhere!

Mrs. Hinton, who had looked up to observe a party of strangers who had entered the room, now that they were seated made reply: "Oh, no! she makes a very handsome corpse. They have her dressed elegantly, with white roses and camellias scattered over her, and she still looks grand and queenly."

"I should like to see her," he said, in a musing tone. "Where is she? in which room?"

"The farthest on the left of the hall. The room with the——"

"I know," interrupted Sid, with a careless nod. "Are there many persons there?"

"Not many. You know, though Mrs. Beckworth was very much admired and courted, she had but few *real* friends. Crowds of people flocked there to see

her for awhile, but they all went away again, and I do not think there are many there now."

Mr. Waltman finished his supper in silence, and in a short time after, Mrs. Hinton observed him from the parlor window taking the direction of his uncle's house.

The grand house was very quiet. A dim light burned in the hall. His light step sent a hollow echo up the gloomy stairway. He noticed everything with a singular insensibility. He wondered at his lack of feeling. Was it, after all, only a sensual passion that had swayed him so entirely, and had perished with the body? He did not care. Let it die! It had brought him only unhappiness. He was glad to find himself free at last.

Nevertheless he felt a vague awe creeping upon him as he entered that rigid presence. There was no one in the room. He closed the door and turned the key to secure himself from interruption. He had come there to arraign his heart,—to put it upon trial,—and to grow acquainted with Death!—to see what of the dread unknown he could wring from its outer semblance.

Was this Adele?—this stony bride of Death? That marble brow, the temple of a noble mind, untenanted now!—the closed eyes—the sealed lips—nothing there! A bright, joyous figure rose up from the past and confronted him. He remembered the very day its vitality began to wane. He remembered the very day the bloom began to fade from her cheek to return no more. Upon that day he broke a solemn vow and blackened his soul with a stain that all time could not remove. Upon that day he broke a heart!

"And *I* still live!" he exclaimed, in sudden frenzy of remorse.

This dead body—dead, perhaps, by his misdoings—flashed a new and appalling light upon his past life, in which its meanness, its utter paltriness, stood forth in

horrible distinctness: until he was ready to cry out, "It would have been better for me had I never been born."

"Adele!" his spirit called. "My love still lives! Is this its dissolution which moves me so? Can one love dust and corruption? No! at last I stand by the death-bed of a passion which has brought me nothing but misery.

> 'What pang
> Is permanent with man? From the highest
> As from the vilest thing of every day
> He learns to wean himself, for the strong hours
> Conquer him.'

"And is this the common end of the wise man and the fool? A brief day of toil and suffering, and we drop back into the infinitude of nothing, from whence we sprang. What use to mar our days with striving after good? And yet there is a thirst, an unquenchable desire within our natures, for something higher than this world affords, and a noble scorn for the vulgar, fleeting pleasures of this earth. Is it for naught? In nature, all things revolve toward some certain aim—some *attainable* purpose. Whatever desire we experience, there is some method for its accomplishment—except this. Is this eternal sighing after unattainable perfection purposeless? Oh, my love! to all these tangled, searching, incoherent thoughts, thou art mute. If thou art dead, indeed, forever, then is this world dead to me!"

As he stood looking down upon the shrouded form, he muttered to himself that she was *dead*—that he would never see her or hear her speak again, that there was no longer such a being in existence *anywhere*. But he could not believe it. Upon her death-bed she had said that God would save her, though in her life she had sometimes expressed a doubt if there were any God. It could not be that she had ceased to exist, in any form.

As he stood by the dead body of his wife, no such thoughts as these had entered his mind. Only a horrible sense of strangeness thrilled him as he looked upon the rigid little form, invested with the awful dignity of death; and his strongest feeling was a desire to get away—out of the unnatural presence. But this corpse awoke no feeling of horror or repulsion, and he lingered and lingered under the influence of a strange fascination. His soul roamed abroad, searching, amid the infinitudes, for its lost love. It sought to pierce the darkness, the infinite stillness, the insensibility which had settled upon her frozen features.

Viola had had no part in his spiritual life. She had never once touched the smallest chord of his spiritual nature. Her influence had passed away with the petty attractions upon which it was founded. Adele had wrought upon the imperishable portion of his being,—the intellect and heart,—and the result of her sway would never cease to be felt throughout his whole life. "Farewell forever!" he exclaimed, touching softly with his lips her forehead and lips. "Yes, *forever!*" "Raised a spiritual body!"—would that be the Adele whom he had known and loved? If it were possible that he should ever see her again it would be as an angel, in a vast, white-robed choir, and he had no sympathy with angels. He had hated the thought of an Omnipotent, to whom we were the insects of an hour. A sinless life, devoid of all ambition, of all sensual pleasures and selfish aims, had no attraction for him.

The plowshare of grief struck deep. The soil was prepared for the planting, and the industrious "enemy" was ready with the "tares."

What had been his life but a vain and ceaseless struggle? Could he point to one single day—ay, one single *hour*—in which he could have said, "Now am I supremely happy"? Not one. Who was to blame for this? Who directed the circumstances by which his existence was ruled? The *hated Eternal One!*

His mind was wrought to its highest pitch of excitement. Despair did not humble and depress him, but aroused within him a fierce wrath against the invincible Power which opposed his will,—who created us, and endowed us with faculties and impulses which must inevitably lead us to destruction. "Gather about us, as we may, things pleasurable,—things elevating and ennobling,—this High Exalted espies the dear delight and snatches it from us before we have clutched it. Shall we render love and gratitude for such cruel tyranny? I seem to hate and defy him! Let him exercise upon me the utmost extent of his power,—let him crush me into the very depths of his *hottest hell*,—and still I could despise and defy him! Even I, small creature as I am, could never have been guilty of such despicable cruelty. '*Narrow* the road,' indeed,—so narrow that only small, meek souls can travel upon it."

A new and horrible energy took possession of him,—a thirst for power,—power to crush, to degrade, to ruin the moral lives of others as his had been ruined. This rank growth of evil was not the work of that hour within the presence of his dead love, but the sudden efflorescence of a deadly plant which had grown with his growth. It had existed before ever he had entered the political arena,—the calculating general of his own cohort of selfish and ambitious desires,—ready to crush the friend or foe who stood in the way of his progress; before ever he had sated his vanity with easy triumphs over the frail hearts of frivolous beauty; before, a school-boy, he not only schemed for the place of honor for himself, but humiliation for his comrades; and perhaps—who knows?—even before, a suckling, in fits of anger—he bit his mother's breast because it failed to yield him the repletion he desired. All that now blossomed forth in full maturity had existed, in germ, in the new-born infant. Is man, then, predestined to destruction? No.

When he turned away from the corpse there was a look of bitter anguish upon his countenance, such as never finds relief in tears. Weep? Not he! There was a fierce flame within, which scorched up all tender and sorrowful emotions such as are accessible to comforting influences. But at the door he turned upon the last dead joy of his life a look of remorse, and there sprang to his lips the cry, "Oh that I were good!" And as he stepped out upon the street,—out into the plodding world,—the shadow of an awful communion rested upon his features. What ailed the world, that it seemed so small,—so insignificant?

He walked the thronged streets like one in a dream. He had exhausted himself with fury; and to what purpose? Nothing answered him. His impotent ravings fell back upon his own soul as if they had encountered nothing but space. Was there such a being as the Invisible?

> "Six thousand years had death reigned tranquilly,
> Nor one corpse came to whisper back
> What *after* death requites us."

Suddenly the conviction fell upon him, "There *was* no God!" Was he not delighted that there was no self-glorifying Power "having mercy upon whom he would," and whom he would sending to destruction? Was he not consumed with joy that there was no insatiable and ever-boding eternity to fright the reveler from his pleasures? Oh, yes! It was a comforting thought; but, somehow, with that thought a sudden blight seemed to fall upon his life. All the life and energy which had hitherto animated him now took flight, leaving a dull, dull void, which nothing could ever fill.

He looked at the people whom he passed, the puny insects of a day, with something like pity. In this new light which had sprung into his mind, how feeble and insignificant seemed the pursuits, the pleasures,

and possessions of this life! How transitory! how evanescent! Wealth, knowledge, fame,—baubles, all! "Toil on; heap your little piles of goods together, for another to inherit when you are dead. It is the same now as it has always been,—as it will always be. The world has *always* existed, and will continue the same henceforth and forever,—a never-ending circle, which had no beginning and could have no ending. Its creatures die and their bodies go to fertilize the soil. The heathen have their mythical gods,—some nobly, some meanly conceived (according to the degree of refinement and civilization of the nation), whom they worship with as great fervor and oftentimes more sincerity than the canting, hypocritical Christians accord to their great I Am. The brutes love; they hate; they have instincts of worship, only on a smaller scale. If the brute emotional power must perish with the body, what reason has man to suppose that he will not share the same fate? None but such as his egotistical nature prompts him to conceive. The Bible, the Talmud, the heathen traditions which we moderns call mythology,—all the work of man, growing in grandeur as man grows wiser and more expert in mental resources." Never before had he given this subject serious and earnest thought. He had accepted the opinions of the masses without investigation. But now he thought he had thoroughly sifted the matter, and settled it in his mind beyond refutation,—*there was no God!*

The world wondered, as they saw Sidney Waltman growing more and more indifferent to his own advancement and to the opinions of the people. His political opponents, released from his vigilant surveillance, waxed bold, and gathered their forces for his overthrow. There was one who had stood in his way,—one whose talent and tact equalled his own, and who possessed a true philanthropy in which Sid had always been lacking. This man had kept pace with Sid in all his advance-

ments, and sometimes it had happened that he had been forced to follow in his wake. For this Joseph Sid had quietly prepared a pit wherein to extinguish the rival luminary which threatened to eclipse himself. This dishonorable piece of work had been discovered, and Sid was summoned by his own party to "clear himself of the vile slander."

He appeared before his tribunal of friends and enemies, gloomy, but calm. His look was abstracted. His friends were triumphant, his enemies dubious, as they observed his mild and careless demeanor. The house was still, every tongue silent, as he arose in reply to his accusers.

"I am sorry to have given any one cause of offense," he said. "I have been too ambitious of place and power, and I think it is better for me, and perhaps for others, that I should withdraw from all political warfare. My overweening ambition unfits me for public office, and I here resign the honorable position proposed by my friends, and decline the candidacy which it had been my greatest pleasure to accept." In regard to the accusations he had nothing to say.

There was a stare of surprise upon the countenances of his audience. "All bosh!" at length some one exclaimed. "Waltman's a consummate hypocrite; would rather *act* a part any day, than appear in his own natural character, even though he lost by it."

But his opponent, his charitable, philanthropic rival, immediately forgave him, and requested that the matter might be dropped.

"I see," resumed Sid, "that my motives are mistrusted. It is no more than I could expect, and yet I speak my own convictions. My decision is final. I have no desire, at present, to contend for position or honor. I hope you will consider me as wholly withdrawn from all part or parcel in politics. And no one, I think, can experience more pleasure at my resignation than myself."

But little more was said on the subject. Sid's ill-used party hastened to change the subject, and afterwards, upon the first private opportunity, individually confessed themselves mistaken in their man. None of them condescended to inquire into his plans and intentions. His generous rival, who was to reap the benefit of Sid's dereliction, was the first to inquire as to his future prospects and shortly after to offer his services.

"I do not know what I shall do yet, or where I shall go," was his reply. "I should like a foreign appointment, and should be glad of your assistance. Consul to some little island or small port will satisfy me. What I want is, to get away."

The place which had witnessed his errors, his failures, and his disappointments became hateful to him in his time of remorse. Fame nor power were any longer objects to him now. It had never entered his mind that Adele could die. He had thought of her as living always, and always loving him. Lately he had felt that she should yet be his,—and now she was *dust*. What was the world to him now? Love another? Never! He never wanted to see another woman. Since happiness was no longer possible to him, he would betake himself to the uttermost corner of the earth, where he could indulge his unhappy thoughts without disturbance. Absolute misery he coveted, and a quiet spot wherein to mourn his fill. unremarked.

It grows dark. The shadows creep slowly, but surely, up from the unknown domain of Night. The silence and calmness of repose gather, like a pall, about us. Are you there, John? and are you thinking of all I have been telling you?

Life no longer seems a thing for laughter and jest. Dark clouds envelop the sky. Oh, how sorrowful I am to-night! The collected misdoings of the whole world overshadow my soul. Ah, that the world were

good, and that it loved light rather than darkness, and was willing to sacrifice the brief pleasures of this life, if need be, to gain the everlasting happiness of eternity! What does God mean by this strange warfare of good and evil?

Forgive me, John, but I too loved Adele, and I cannot part from her without a few bitter thoughts. She was not what the world calls "good," and I cannot tell what God has done with her soul; added it, I hope, to the throng who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Deep and sincere repentance is never scorned by the merciful God.

"*Raised a spiritual body.*" Divested of its mortal mould the spirit stands forth in its utter nakedness, fair or foul as our lives have made it. It is better to begin betimes to be good, John, to cleanse and purify your soul and clothe it with good thoughts and noble deeds, that it may not come unadorned to the "marriage of the Lamb."

I speak no more to you, John, than to myself; and I mean diligently to seek the mending of my ways, that I may be fitted for that eternity of freedom which is promised to those who can find it in their hearts to deny themselves for the sake of God's pure laws. There was a time when I doubted the mercy and goodness of the Father. But now that I have made myself acquainted with his exceeding patience and long-suffering toward his foolish, wayward children, I am made to wonder at the exceeding, the illimitable, grandeur of his attributes, and no longer fret myself over the rewarding of virtue and punishing of vice.

CHAPTER XXV.

ENUMERATING ONE'S BLESSINGS.

THE character, disposition, and habits of Mrs. Beckworth were freely canvassed, now that she was dead. No fear of her keen wit and of her extensive influence now. The handsome and singularly fascinating young woman, who had suddenly sprung from "the very fag-end of the world" into the heart of metropolitan society and electrified it with her wild, picturesque beauty and grotesque ways, who had snatched the laurels from the aristocratic heads of the high-bred belles, and worn them in spite of their malicious manœuvring, had as suddenly and unexpectedly vanished. What was there left her envious rivals but to desecrate her memory, and lay bare to the public gaze her every fault and foible?

Ophelia could not endure the unjust criticisms, the merciless judgment, and the callous remarks of the public upon her dead friend, and so she went on a visit to some friends in a neighboring city. Here she employed herself in striving to divert her mind from her trouble,—casually falling at times into fits of despondent musing.

The two loves of her life snatched away, how vacant, how dull, her friendless future! Oh, it seemed very cruel in the overruling powers to darken her life with such heavy bereavements! A life without friendship or love,—it was hideous to contemplate!

From this rebellious mood she was suddenly startled by a telegram from Mrs. Berges. "Come home immediately," it said; "Mr. Berges and Walter are both very ill."

How changed her thoughts as she hastened home!

"Oh, my papa! I cannot give him up! If God takes *him*, I have no desire to live. Oh, thou Most High, forgive me that I have been so unmindful of thy goodness in granting me so kind, so loving, a parent! And I had turned from this kind, patient friend to mourn over my lost idols! Oh, how unmindful we are of our greatest blessings until they begin to slip from our grasp!"

But these eleventh-hour petitions and promises seldom avail aught, and, notwithstanding her late repentance and prayers, Ophelia found her father dying.

There was a crowd of people around the bed. She pushed through them and stood, in her traveling attire, looking despairingly down upon her dying parent. Ah, me! his account with this world was almost closed.

"Poor Ophelia!" he said, looking up at her as she stood weeping silently by his bedside, "poor child! I don't know what is to become of you!"

Ophelia threw herself upon her knees, and burying her face against the bedside, sobbed aloud.

"Oh, my child," he said, mournfully, "you must not grieve so! You are a good girl, and some way will be provided for you."

"Oh, yes, papa, I know there will! Are you happy, papa? are you willing to go?"

"I do not know, child; I suffer so that I will be glad to escape this pain."

"But, papa," she persisted, "you believe that God will save your soul? You love and trust him?"

"Yes, yes; I have always loved and trusted him. All will be well as soon as I am rid of this pain."

In a few minutes more he *was* rid of the pain, and "all was well." Why should we lament the sacred dead? "In my Father's house" are there not "many mansions?" And *our* loss is only for a brief, brief period.

Mrs. Berges was confined to her room, too ill to see her husband buried, but she ordered that the preparations for the funeral should be upon the grandest scale.

"Give me an inexpensive funeral," had been his dying request: "a plain oak coffin, no trappings, and no endless train of carriages. It is foolish to throw money, which would buy many a poor beggar's meal, into the grave to rot."

Walter, too, was very ill, and none but the nurse and physician were admitted to his room. He had not been told of his father's death until the third day after the funeral, when Ophelia carried to him the sad tidings.

Ophelia started in astonishment as she entered his room. How close to death the little fellow must have been to have assumed so nearly its similitude! All the red and brown was gone from his face, which looked thin and wan. Ophelia sat by him and held the slender little hand and smoothed the tangled hair from his forehead, while she asked how he had been, and if he wouldn't be well soon, and told him how lonely they all were without him.

"Ophelia," he said, suddenly, "is papa well?"

Ophelia looked at him sadly. "No, Walter; papa will never be well in this world any more."

"Is he dead, Ophelia?"

"Yes, Walter, papa is dead."

"I am glad of it," he said, after a long pause. "Heaven is a beautiful place, Ophelia, and all are happy there. I saw it in my dream one night, and papa was there."

"Was it like a golden city, Walter, with golden streets?"

"No," said Walter, shaking his head. "It was like no city, unless there could be a city of palaces and parks, with, oh! the grandest, grandest trees, and broad savannahs, with most beautiful flowers and streams of water. Oh, I could never, never describe it! And every one was so kind to me there, Ophelia, I think I shall remember that dream all my life, and shall be willing to bear with any hardship if I may at last find a home in that beautiful, happy place."

"I had such a dream as that once, Walter, when I was no larger than you, and it made a strong impression upon me at the time; but when I got out into the world the impressions soon wore off, and I was but little better than before. It is easy for you to set resolutions now, and while there are no temptations it seems easy to keep them; but, Walter, there are many trials before you of which you do not dream. Let us promise each other *now* to try to love the great God in whose hands are our hearts, and to live in subjection to his divine laws."

Walter readily promised; strong in faith because untried, and undaunted by the memory of past failures.

What! give up an eternity of paradise for the brief pleasures of this brief life? Never! And yet, dear Walter, these "brief pleasures," when placed within the reach of our own hands, with the joys of that heavenly Eden dim and far away, entice with a strength which only Deity can overcome.

Walter recovered and went back to his studies and old companions; soon the shadow passed from off his young life, and all things went on the same in the Berges household, except the quiet coming and going of the master.

Though Ophelia wore a guarded countenance, secretly she repined over the gloominess of her lot. The days seemed empty and lone. She looked around among her associates, whose lives seemed so full of good things, and in her heart complained that her sentence was unjust.

"I crave no vain and idle pleasures: only such blessings as strengthen the soul, — love, friendship, congenial companionship, — without which life is a burden."

And so, although her friends saw her pursuing her accustomed duties with apparent resignation, her heart held no such gentle emotions, and her days and nights were spoiled with bitter repining.

One night, only a few months after her father's death, she awoke from a dream of smothering and oppression

to find herself almost suffocated with smoke. A tall man in the fireman's uniform stood over her, shaking her and calling, "Awake! awake! The house is in flames; you will be burned to death!"

She stared at him in bewildered alarm.

"Madam, you must excuse me, but if we remain here longer both of us will be lost." And he snatched her from the bed and dashed into the thick cloud of smoke and flames. She clung to him desperately. She clasped her arms tightly about his neck and hid her face against his bosom. What a pity it was not one of her lovers! But our plain, ordinary lover of the nineteenth century is not wont to be wandering around his divinity's residence at unseemly hours on the alert for an opportunity to distinguish himself in her service; and the only person in the city whom Ophelia had a right to distinguish by that title, Mr. Hal Ripley, lay calmly reposing in his own comfortable chamber, while an unromantic fireman appropriated his opportunity for rescuing his beloved from the "jaws of death."

He deposited his burden upon the ground, unclasped the clinging arms with rather impolite haste, exclaiming to the group standing around, "Here! some of you take care of this lady," and was gone before she had time to note his features or murmur thanks.

"Oh, mamma and Walter! where are they?" she cried, clasping her hands, and shivering in her thin drapery. One gentleman stepped out from the group, who divided their curious attention between her and the burning house; and while he assured her that Mrs. Berges and Walter were safe and well cared for, drew off his overcoat and fastened it around her shoulders. This was another unromantic party: a middle-aged gentleman with a brawny, leather-colored countenance and an unsympathetic look; but Ophelia gratefully accepted his services, and allowed herself to be placed in a wagon and driven to the house of the friend who had sheltered Mrs. Berges and Walter.

Mrs. Berges had secured her jewels and all her important papers, before she remembered to send some one to look after Ophelia. These things attended to, she sat calmly down to the investigation of the insurance policies, to assure herself that she sustained no pecuniary loss. Walter seemed in a profound study, taking note of nothing that was going on around him, while Ophelia wept silently for her lost home. Now, indeed, was she bereaved; she had no home. There was not one spot in the whole world upon which she had the slightest claim. "Here," she exclaimed, "my misfortunes end, for there is nothing left me that may be taken."

As soon as was practicable, Mrs. Berges proceeded to arrange her affairs. She wanted to leave L—— and take Walter to St. Louis, where together they would find a comfortable home with her brother. As for Ophelia, she would give her the five thousand which her papa had always intended for her marriage portion, —*that* would keep her comfortably until her marriage. Perhaps she wouldn't be so choice now. She would be glad to take her along, she told Ophelia, but she couldn't think of burdening her brother with such a family.

"How beautiful and touching," exclaims the writer, "is the devotion of a mother!" Clouds of vapory sentiment have been formed around this nucleus. Oh, yes! How beautiful and touching is the devotion of the *goose*, who will fight everything off from the good things of life except her own dear goslings, and hiss and bite every other young thing which ventures to come that way!

Shame on the mother who can find room only for her *own* children in her narrow heart!

Not that Ophelia found fault with her adopted mamma's proceedings: she thanked her for her beneficent gift, and immediately secured a room at a private boarding-house, and prepared to make herself as com-

fortable as was possible under the circumstances. Her "five thousand" was in notes which Mrs. Berges selected and placed in her hands, and which Ophelia handed over to the lawyer whom her father had always employed for collection. The old gentleman looked them over slowly and with an imperturbable countenance. "You call this five thousand dollars, do you?" he exclaimed, satirically. "You want the money collected and deposited in the bank?"

"Yes," returned Ophelia.

He gathered them all into one hand, and slapping them upon the table, exclaimed, "They are not worth five hundred!" Ophelia stared in silence. "They are notes of hand for borrowed money upon individuals who have decamped or are bankrupts. Mrs. Berges certainly knew that they were utterly worthless. It may be that I can get three hundred out of the whole lot, but it is impossible that I should get more."

He handed them back, but Ophelia declined to take them. "Do what you can with them," she returned, "and pay yourself for the trouble."

He took the notes and departed, and Ophelia sat down to the contemplation of her future. Now was all the good of her life spent, and only the worthless rind remained, fit only to be cast away. But life was forced upon her whether she willed or not; and there was no alternative left but to take up its burdens and plod on to the end. She must make some effort—how hateful the task!—to support herself. She must humble her pride and petition her former associates for their assistance.

Her only available talent was music. She must procure a music-class. It is useless to go the rounds with poor Ophelia, or relate how this one was "*so* sorry, but had already engaged a teacher," or how that one had "taken a resolution to have none but German teachers, which she was grieved, indeed, that she could

not break in favor of her dear friend," and another "had not yet made up her mind whether she would have a teacher this year or not," or how devoted to the interests of their "sweet friend," and how entirely helpless to assist her, were these people.

There is nothing either pleasing or poetic in this sort of work. Besides, I want to feel magnanimous and philanthropic to-day; and if I go to delving too deep into the general characteristics of humanity, I shall be wanting to drill a hole through the centre of this "terrestrial ball," and blast the whole concern into the sublime infinitude of *nothing;* and that, you will allow, would not be the quintessence of charity.

Suffice it to say that among the whole of her "dear five hundred friends" she procured six music scholars (two of whom never paid her). She began upon her task with the utmost distaste, which was not diminished by experience. Ophelia was not composed of the most durable material, and, before long, harassing cares and the tediousness of unaccustomed labor began to tell upon her physique. Dr. Hughes, who was now her only *real,* serviceable friend, observed the change and advised a cessation from all distasteful employment. He had heard of Mrs. Berges's munificence, and had no idea that her occupation was compulsory.

Ophelia declined resting, and plodded on with her dreary work. It is true, some young ladies would have found Ophelia's task an easy one; but her previous luxurious, indolent life had unfitted her for *any* sort of toil. That, perhaps, is why we see the children of wealth descending so swiftly to poverty upon an income that would be affluence to the industrious managing children of the poor.

At last Ophelia grew ill; but it only lasted a few days. She would never fall into ill health without a desperate resistance. But her appetite was gone, and nothing could restore it; her strength, too, was upon the wane. She determined she *would not* fall into ill

health. She would take more exercise, go more into society, and be more cheerful and contented.

Her efforts at cheerfulness were fitful, and the new face which society now turned toward her was not such as is calculated to inspire hilarity or content. At last she fell back upon books and the sofa for recreation; which, with short walks,—which tired her,—and her music-lessons,— which had become unbearably distasteful,—consumed the most of her time. The remainder she was obliged to employ in attending to her wardrobe, which was by no means as extensive as formerly.

An invalid! Heavens! she would start up with a sudden access of indignant resistance, and vow that she would not submit to the slow, insidious encroachment of disease. There was no use in being sick if one had the spirit to will it otherwise. She would dash out for a walk and come back with a wearied air and languid step, her anger and her strength all gone.

"You will not take my advice," said Herve, reproachfully. "It will not take you long to worry yourself into your grave at this rate."

"I am not anxious about protracting my life," was her reply; "it is not so gay."

"If it is your purpose to commit suicide," returned Herve, sternly, "you have struck upon a sure method."

"My good friend," she returned, with a smile, "do you imagine that I continue to work when I know that I need rest, from mere obstinacy? I work because it is necessary for my support; I might as well work myself to death as starve."

"I thought you had money," he replied, in astonishment. "I was told that Mrs. Berges had allowed you a considerable sum from the estate."

"A considerable sum in *notes*, which yielded about enough to pay two months' board and incidental expenses."

Herve had but little more to say, and left early.

"Is it possible," thought Ophelia, with a sigh, "that the lack of money can change me in *his* estimation?"

But Herve had only gone home to *think*. He was not quick at planning. His intellect, like most ponderous machinery, was slow in its evolutions, but sure. Some five days elapsed before he had attained a final conclusion, and a desperate one it was. *She must marry*. Hers was not the character or disposition to be improved by rough contact with the world. They were hard, unyielding natures which received a higher polish from that sort of friction; while the gentle and pliant are wounded and hurt by harsh experiences. Ophelia was a *womanly* woman; constituted with such attributes as are developed by a loving and refined home life. Publicity was distasteful to her; and while her social instincts were strong,—so strong that she preferred a few near, very near, friends to whom she could unfold her whole mind, to a great number of lukewarm acquaintances,—she was deficient in that grand magnanimity of soul (so seldom a feminine attribute) which characterizes the noblest type of human being, the philanthropist. Home was Ophelia's peculiar province, and there was but one method by which she could obtain that and the social position to which she had been bred,—marriage. And, as a preliminary step toward this end, Herve offered *himself;* not that he had any hope of being accepted, but it was a *step*, even though it failed.

Ophelia stared in undisguised astonishment at his deliberate, business-like proposal; but there was an earnestness, too, in his manner which made it impossible to treat it lightly. "The idea, I know, is new and strange to you," he said. "It had never entered your mind before, consequently I would not expect you to love me very much at first. The esteem you are so good as to accord me, of your own free will, and the right to take care of you and make you happy, would be an ample return for my own devotion; I could trust

to time and your naturally loving disposition for a deeper affection. You understand my character sufficiently by this time to know that I had studied this matter thoroughly, and settled it, *in my own mind*, beyond a doubt, before speaking of it to you. Therefore you have only to look into your own heart and follow its promptings."

Ophelia was not quite so unembarrassed as Herve. As she met his earnest look, and observed how he suppressed every exhibition of emotion which might prove distasteful to her, she was deeply moved. She did not speak for some time, but her face told of a struggle going on within. At length it grew calm. "I regret to say, my dear friend, that it cannot be. I am going to give you the strongest proof of my esteem that I could possibly give, by telling you *why*." She paused a moment and her face took on a deeper flush. "There is another, less worthy, I fear, who has, by some means, enslaved my heart. I regret it! There is no need of my telling you how hard I struggled against it; for it is a shameful thing, you know, for a woman to bestow her love where it is not wanted."

"*Not wanted!*" exclaimed Herve, his face catching some of the color of her own. "His *actions* forced it upon you *against your will*. I hate that man sometimes; such villains ought to be crushed out of existence. They are but a trouble and a disgrace to the human race." He stopped suddenly, for Ophelia was trembling violently. "Good heavens! I am a brute! I was scarcely conscious of what I was saying." He turned away and walked the full length of the rooms, and when he returned Ophelia had regained her usual composure.

"My nerves are not in the best of order, I think," she said, with a little laugh, which had not the slightest spark of mirthfulness in it. "The slightest jar sets them all astir."

"I should not have said what I did," returned Herve.

"It was ungenerous, and I did him great injustice, for he has some noble qualities. There *must* be *some* good in him, or he could never have obtained so high a place in your esteem." He smothered his jealousy to the best of his ability, and said all that he could in his rival's favor, and then went away with a heavy heart. He had no faith in Kingsley. He had watched his movements covertly, and had discovered his penchant for Ophelia; but he believed him to be engaged to Louise Benton.

Herve did not return for a long time, and though Ophelia knew that he was waiting for the affair to die out from her memory, she missed him sadly. No one said now, "You are an angel, Ophelia;" and now she struggled harder against the evil of her nature, and it seemed with less effect than ever before. She never knew before the real extent of her own heart's wickedness. In the old luxurious, petted life, she had never felt the slightest touch of envy or jealousy; but now that she saw her old associates in their gay prosperity passing her by, unmindful of her trials and cares, she could not suppress a feeling of bitterness. When she had used to roll along the streets in her father's carriage, she was full of pity for the toilers without; but now that she was brought nearer them, there was no pity in her heart. "They are hardened," she thought, "and do not suffer."

In her prosperity, when there was but little to try her temper, she was serene and sympathetic; *now* she was morose and unsocial. She shuddered at every knock upon the door, and drew a breath of relief when the unwelcome intruder was gone. Moral and mental gloom enveloped her and clung to her soul with the tenacity of *physical* disease. Life had become hateful to her, and her fellow-creatures intolerable.

Did she, in these trying times, forget that God, the Father, was wise and good, and full of mercy and compassion? I fear that she did sometimes. But she was

never driven to that desperate pass which the irreligious oftentimes come upon in the hour of adversity; she never *hated* him, never even felt her love for him diminished. But she did feel reproachful, and that he had forsaken her without cause; at least without further cause than other of her fellow-creatures were giving every day.

She could not afford to give up her faith in him. It was her only comfort. And then she had read: "Whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." But that did not lessen her trials, nor render them any the easier to endure.

She had been compelled to remove to a cheaper and less comfortable boarding-house, and even here her expenses bore heavily upon her mind. Such ugly, carking cares as these are sometimes too much for the endurance of man, with his hardier physique, his broader knowledge of the world with which he has to deal, and the many avenues which are open to him should his prime dependence fail; think what it must be to a timid woman, to whom "the world" is a frightful, unknown spectre, ready to crush her in its devouring jaws if she strays even so much as a hair's-breadth out of the way.

Sometimes Ophelia felt so timid and alone, so scared at the great world, that, accustomed as she was to the publicity of city life, she shrank even from the ordinary gaze of the passer-by, and blushed and quivered if it was, as frequently happened, protracted into a curious stare. She slept little and ate little, but kept her brain and fingers ceaselessly at work. Already she looked worn and faded. The coarse food, miserably prepared, palled upon her taste, and she grew thinner and thinner from an insufficiency of wholesome nourishment.

Her former opulent associates now scarcely ever perceived her when they passed her upon the street; and never visited her any more, she had become "so

strange and unsocial," they said. Hal Ripley passed her with a polite, indifferent bow: divested of her fine clothes and her high position, she was no longer attractive to this gay young nabob; and a rumor had reached Ophelia that he was now entirely devoted to the pretty, pert, and wealthy Miss Fischer. She was not disappointed or hurt; her opinion of Hal remained the same as it had always been.

One evening Herve persuaded her to accompany him to a party at Mrs. Harper's. She had worn her mourning two seasons, and really she needed something to rouse her from her unhappy mood. She had always liked Mrs. Harper, and so she accepted the invitation. Ophelia was not one of those persons whose spirits are elated or depressed according to the magnificence or plainness of their attire, and so she wore the same air of serene dignity in her plain mourning as she had worn in her costly toilettes. They were a little late, and their entrance was unmarked save by the cordial hostess.

With what a changed mind Ophelia observed the crowd! She could not summon a single answering smile for her affable, joyous acquaintances. But suddenly the coldness of her deportment passed away and all her countenance changed. Herve, observing it, and looking about for the cause, encountered the vivid dark eyes of Kingsley.

Back again? Yes, there he was, with the old intense look, and the old indifferent air, as if he knew his power over her, but had no curiosity as to its extent. And the old thralldom resumed its sway; and the fetters, falling into the old groove, wounded and hurt her sorely, and revived all the old pain. It was necessary now that she should talk, that she should force her attention upon something; and so earnestly and forcibly did she plunge into the subject which an intelligent gentleman had been vainly urging upon her attention, that he changed his mind about fulfilling an

imaginary engagement in another portion of the house and remained.

They went home early, at Ophelia's request; she did not sit down to indulge or battle with her emotions, but, midnight as it was, plunged into a cold water bath. Nothing like cold water for an attack of fever or love! After this she drew on a loose robe and sat down to her writing-table and wrote until dawn. It was only some neglected letters she was answering; Ophelia was not literary, and could only write pleasant letters,—nothing more. At dawn she threw open the window and let in a stream of the softest-tinted twilight. She leaned out of the window and looked toward the east, where the gentle Aurora began to show her roseate face. "Ah, I did not know the world was so beautiful!" she exclaimed, with her hands pressed upon her breast in a sort of ecstasy. Never before had she seen the sun rise.

Suddenly she withdrew herself and hastily closed her window. The individual from whom, throughout the whole night, she had forcibly restrained her thoughts, presented himself *visibly*, and taking off his hat, had made her a profound bow from the opposite side of the street. Ophelia contemplated her flowing robe and disheveled locks with a burning cheek. And then she knelt down to a very bitter prayer,—the strangest prayer she had ever offered up. "What need of this?" she cried, after the manner of general humanity, who choose to question the ways of Providence and urge reform upon the Almighty. "To what purpose do I suffer and struggle? Who is benefited by it?"

For the sake of justiee, it is necessary here to explain that Kingsley did not know the extent of the damage he had wrought within Ophelia's heart. He felt some uncomfortable pangs himself, and complained loudly against his fate; but she, the cool, the impenetrable, placid creature, was it likely that she cared whether he came or went, lived or died? No, it was not at all

likely; and then he grumbled and almost cursed himself for a fool that he found it impossible to keep his thoughts away from her, and was more devoted than ever to Louise Benton,—the affectionate little Louise,—who was so very kind to him, but who, if he had only known the truth, had not one tithe the heart-power possessed by Ophelia.

From this time forth Ophelia's health declined. "You must take some medicine," said the young physician, her friend. "You look haggard. I was shocked at the change in your looks in the last few days. It has become a positive necessity that you should take medicine."

Ophelia had a horror of medicine,—she had taken so little in her life. If she began to take medicine, that was to give up to being sick; so she plodded on with her music-lessons and other duties as long as her feet would carry her. Often she met Kingsley. Sometimes he pretended not to see her; at others he spoke to and looked at her, with all the feeling it was possible for a human countenance to reveal in his face. If she conquered herself and obtained a temporary indifference, one of these vivid glances brought back all the old emotions with a force that was overwhelming.

For a long time she kept up a show of cheerfulness and serenity, but her continued struggles and trials were not without effect; and she gave it up at last and placed her head upon the pillow from whence it might never rise. She hoped it might be so. There were pains in her head, her shoulders, and all her limbs. It was rest, absolute rest, to be afflicted bodily. It drew her mind away from the thoughts, the wearying, ever-surging thoughts, which had tortured her for so long.

She did not send for a physician, but her landlady *did;* and it was not long before Dr. Hughes was in her room portioning out powders and lotions, and scolding her for having been so obstinate. She was a little too sick to care for his being there, and took everything he

gave her without the slightest protest. Pain did not make her petulant but humble, and she was as submissive as a conquered child.

Under the skillful treatment of her good physician, Ophelia did not suffer long; and when she became convalescent he was not allowed to come so often. During her illness she had become a little better acquainted with herself and with the strong Power which had opposed her will; and then she confessed that her knowledge of God had been "by the hearing of the ear." But now she saw him in truth, and repented of her pride and rebellion. She had tried to make her own road to happiness, and had complained because of the impediments which would not yield to her will. "He that reproveth God, let him answer it." *Her* answer was, utter submission to his will.

I begin to wonder how good you are, John, and to fear that you have not "made your peace with God." We cannot live always, you know,—nor have *I* any desire to live always, because I look forward to a life far, far more pleasing and satisfactory.

Yet I do not want to go just yet,—even though I knew to a certainty that I should step into a golden palace and elysium,—because I fear that I should go alone. Even in the Land of the Blest, I do not think I could divest myself of a vain regret that, coming so near you, John, I had not lain forcible hands on you and taken you with me, whether or no. I have come to like you so well that I cannot see how I am to be content in that other land if you are not there too. I charge you, John, be faithful, patient, and loving, and all will be well.

CHAPTER XXVI.

COERCION AND PERSUASION.

HERVE did not take his refusal much to heart, it seemed. He continued to visit Ophelia, and to do what he could to make her life a little brighter.

One evening as he passed the little house on C—— Street, where Ophelia boarded, he was surprised to see Kingsley coming out. He had a cigar in his hand and paused upon the step to light it. He looked so complaisant, so self-satisfied, as he sauntered off down the street, that our sturdy young Achilles had much ado to keep from following and bestowing upon him a forcible experience of the "chastening rod."

He looked after him a moment, but as he immediately turned a corner and disappeared from view, he changed his mind and entered the house his rival had just left.

The parlor door was slightly ajar, and seeing Ophelia still sitting there, by the window, he was about to enter, when something peculiar in her attitude arrested his step upon the threshold. He did not pause long, however, for he soon perceived that she was utterly unconscious. He was not slow in arousing her, and as she opened her sorrowful eyes upon him she smiled mournfully, as if the consciousness of his tender, loving pity soothed and comforted her.

Herve dared not look upon this picture too long. The thought that this noble, Christian woman should be made the toy and plaything, the very slave, of such a man, excited within him a degree of wrathful indignation that was almost beyond his control. *He* knew—oh, yes, *Herve* knew—how this state of affairs was kept up by Kingsley's own determined will, and

that to satisfy his own vanity; careless that the "infinite sickness of heart" which caused the Greek Penelope to long to be snatched away into nothingness, rather than to be tormented longer by the anguish of hopeless love, was *her* portion. But Herve did *not* know that "this state of affairs," so plain to him, was utterly unknown to Kingsley; and that, while he stood upon the steps so complaisantly, lighting his cigar, he was almost mad with jealousy and disappointment.

Herve did not remain long, and an hour after he entered a restaurant where several young men of his acquaintance were seated around a table, whereon was spread a symposium of salmon and hot coffee. They were enjoying themselves it seemed; not noisily, for they were all well-bred young men, but merrily enough nevertheless.

"There's the doctor," cried out one, "the rising young physician. Come, Hughes, you are usually a very selfish fellow, but we will not take a refusal this time. Here, waiter,—another plate."

A chair was passed for him between his cordial host and the only man he hated. He accepted the invitation with a polite "thank you" and turned a cold shoulder upon Kingsley.

"You are surely acquainted with Kingsley, Hughes?" said Hal Ripley from across the table. His dislike for that young gentleman seemed to have moderated somewhat.

"As much as I care to be," was the blunt reply.

"Indeed! Is it possible?" exclaimed Kingsley, staring with easy insolence. "I had thought the whole world must be mad to know me. I wonder if our 'rising young physician' couldn't be induced to say a little more in that strain; I love to be reviled, it is new and exciting."

"I may have something to say to you presently," returned Hughes, not having yet glanced at him.

"'Coffee and pistols for two,' I wonder? or a dun;

I'm out of money remember, if it's a dun. Or perhaps—sure enough, we are rivals! The pretty Ophelia."

"Sir!" exclaimed Herve, looking him sternly in the eye, "if you will have the patience to wait, I will satisfy you as to what I want with you. My respect for the lady you mention prevents my discussing her publicly with such a person."

Kingsley's eye flashed, and his swarthy countenance blanched. "I was wrong, indeed, you say well, to confer upon you such an honor."

"Gentlemen," exclaimed a quiet, gentlemanly-looking young man, "you forget this is no drinking-saloon; this conduct is a poor return for Middleton's hospitality. I hope you will postpone your private quarrels until some more suitable occasion."

Neither of the gentlemen made a reply, and a silence and restraint fell upon the group; until Kingsley, taking a card from his pocket and writing a few words upon it, handed it to Herve, and in a very gentlemanly manner took his departure.

The next we see of the two rivals they have met in a thick wood, a few miles from the city.

"Well," exclaimed Kingsley, viewing his frowning opponent with a smile, "I am here. What are your charges?"

"I have no charges to make," returned the other, sternly; "I have come here to beat a little of the meanness out of you, if that is possible."

Kingsley drew forth a revolver,—still gay and smiling.

"The weapon of a coward!" sneered Hughes. "You may murder me if you wish, but not until I have made you suffer as you deserve." He laid a heavy hand upon Kingsley's shoulder. "I am going to administer upon you a chastisement you have long stood in need of; I warn you, defend yourself."

Kingsley threw away his revolver with a laugh, and the two closed in a desperate hand-to-hand battle.

I do not like fights, John. I have seen very few, and would not feel very uncomfortable if I had seen none at all; and it does not please me to go through the details of this one which left "Achilles" bruised and "Hector" like a rag.

Herve carried his senseless antagonist to a cottage hard by. "He has been beaten," was his explicit reply to the inquiries of its inmates. He placed him upon a couch, dressed his wounds, and, taking a vial from his pocket, poured its contents between his teeth; then he sat by him until morning.

In the gray dawn Kingsley moaned, turned upon his pillow, and opening wide his dark eyes, fixed them upon the watcher.

For a moment he glared at him, then struggled to rise. Herve went to him and placed him gently back upon the pillow. "Never mind about it now, Kingsley. You are punished, and my wrath is appeased. It was not upon my own account; you know why I wanted to punish you?"

"We were rivals," returned Kingsley, sullenly. "I know of no other cause."

"We are not rivals," returned Herve, gravely; "*my* case was settled long ago,—that is, I was decisively rejected. I think if you will search your mind you will find a more plausible reason. And for that purpose I will leave you to a few days' solitude." He had a little medicine-case, from which he was apportioning some powders for his patient.

"I tell you," returned the other, "I can think of no other cause for your singular conduct, even if I had a thousand years to reflect; unless it was because I loved her like an insane idiot as I have been, and that you wanted to clear her track of such a fool. I wish you had finished your work!"

"If you love her as you profess, why do you not marry her?"

A keen, protracted scrutiny, and then Kingsley made

answer: "Hughes, I have hated you until now. Since you have beaten me, I believe I like you better. I deserved it, no doubt, for I was striving to make her love me, when I had solemnly promised her father that I would not. I hope I am going to die, for I am tired to death of this life."

"You are not going to die," returned the physician; "so you needn't trouble yourself on that score."

"You do not know my constitution. I never expected to live long. Look at me. Do you think it is probable that I have a half-dozen years to live at most? and I sincerely hope that you have shortened them."

"And Ophelia?" the query was simple, but the cool gray eye searched his interlocutor's countenance keenly.

"Oh, *she* cares nothing for me," cried the other, impatiently. "She verbally rejected me two years ago, and has managed to keep me at a distance, by her looks and actions, ever since. You are a good fellow, Hughes,—even when I hated you I had to acknowledge that,—marry her and take her clear out of my sight. If she does not love you it is because she cannot love."

"It is because she loves *you*," returned Hughes, quietly. He did not look up, consequently did not see the sudden *life* which sprang into the other's countenance. "No," he continued, composedly, "I shall never marry any one. It is you whom Ophelia loves, not me. Upon you depends her future happiness. And you talk about dying!"

"The seeds of consumption are here, I fear," returned Kingsley, placing his hand upon his breast.

"You are mistaken," returned Herve. "I have sounded your lungs,—they are strong. You are delicately constituted, but there is no disease in your organization. These slender frames often contain the strongest fibre. I see no reason that you should not serve out your 'three-score years and ten.'"

Kingsley looked at him curiously, but said nothing.

"It is not for the love of *you*, Kingsley, understand, that I want you to marry Ophelia. It is because I believe her *life* depends upon it." Herve turned away as he said this, as if to leave the room.

"You are in earnest?"

"Yes," returned Herve, curtly. "Is it likely that I would be joking upon such a subject?"

"Give me your hand, Hughes," returned Kingsley, putting out his with a countenance beaming with brotherly love. "There is not another such human being in existence, I know! You are so much more worthy of a good woman's love than I; but you have misjudged me; yesterday I was willing that you should, but now I value your good opinion and will justify myself, as far as I am justifiable. You are mistaken, no doubt, in thinking that Ophelia cares for me. She has not even a warm friendship for me. Perhaps I might, with time and patience, win from her a lukewarm regard; but no man has a right to say *love* to a woman until he has some prospect of giving her as comfortable a home as the one from which he takes her. Could I, think you,—loving her as I assuredly do,—endure to see her brought down to a life of hardship, such as mine? My dear friend, your intentions are noble, your generosity unparalleled, but you have not given the subject days and nights of study as *I* have, or you would see that my case is a hopeless one. Her father saw it, and, though he loved me as a son, he was not willing that I should take her to share my own unpromising life; and I promised him faithfully that I would not seek her again."

"The circumstances under which that promise was made," returned Hughes, "release you from it now. Then Ophelia was surrounded by every comfort, every luxury; now she is alone in the world, and dependent upon her own resources."

"I thought she had been provided for," returned

Kingsley, in surprise. "I have been told so by responsible persons."

Herve explained how Mrs. Berges had pretended to fulfil her husband's wishes, and provide for her adopted daughter's future support, with a lot of rubbish in the shape of *notes*.

Kingsley fell into a protracted reverie. "The world would think she had made but a poor match," he said, at length.

"I do not know that it matters what the world thinks. Besides, while *I* live"——he paused abruptly.

"Benefactor, eh?" exclaimed Kingsley, with a vicious smile. "Look here! I want it distinctly understood that, should Ophelia Berges ever consent to marry me, she is dead to *you*. I want no chances for disagreeable comparisons—nor would I accept any of your assistance to save either of us from starvation."

"Of course," returned Herve, not in the least disturbed by the other's emphatic tone, "that would be just as you thought best. The shrewdest of business men are sometimes unfortunate; and should you ever fall into trouble, I want you to remember that I am at your service. I am more practical than you, Kingsley, and better fitted for battling with the world, and—you will excuse me—more likely to make money. Among all your fine talents you have not one that is likely to lead you to wealth. It is because you have been educated for a gentleman, not a drudge. But you have a vivid energy, and the world of letters is always open to you; that will keep you from starving."

Kingsley eyed him for awhile in silence. "I could not have believed this of *any one*, Hughes. How is it possible that she could overlook such a noble creature as you for a graceless scamp like me? I have not been accustomed to such nobility and goodness, but the opposite."

"I must go now," said Herve, turning away.

"We will talk of this again, I hope," returned

Kingsley. "And whatever you may feel inclined to say about my faults and failings, I assure you, will be gratefully received."

Nothing but goodness, John,—pure goodness,—can have any permanent effect against the evil of human nature. Only disinterested kindness can melt the hardened heart; and the very hardest must yield to that. Assumed goodness, no matter how artfully worn, is sure to be found out. If we do good in the hope of a reward, then it serves us right if we are disappointed. If we are kind to others that we may receive praise, it is no matter if we are forced to endure the hard, hard trial of ingratitude. It takes the force of real, genuine earnestness to work any reforming influence.

These two rivals, who, according to the code of the world, should have been mortal enemies, shook hands as affectionately as if they had been brothers.

Before leaving, Herve went into the kitchen, where the woman of the house was busied about her work. "Good-morning, ma'am," he said, to attract attention.

She whisked about suddenly, eyed him sharply for a moment, then returned a rather ungracious "Good-morning."

"I am about to leave my friend for a few days in your care," said Herve, "and I want to bespeak your sympathy and good-will in his behalf."

No answer, unless a vicious swinging of pots and skillets could be called one.

"Here," continued Herve, in a louder tone, "is a slight compensation for your trouble. And whatever other charges you may consider proper to make shall be attended to when I return."

The hard heart melted at the sight of that bill. Her countenance softened as she took it in her hand; it was a ten, and her manner became as meek and subdued as that of a pet lamb. Oh, potent bill!

"How did your friend get hurt?" she inquired, sympathizingly.

"Got into a scrape with a young man who was stronger, and who beat him," returned Herve, carelessly.

"The villain!" exclaimed the cottager, "to go to whipping a young man, and such a *nice* young man too, who was not as strong as he. He ought to have his head knocked off."

Herve did not enter very enthusiastically into the spirit of her indignation, but changed the subject. "You will find him amiable and worthy of the kindest attention. I have left written directions for his treatment, and will return in five or six days, at which time I hope he will be well enough to travel; and while I think of it, you needn't mention that I gave you anything. He is very sensitive and proud, and I think wouldn't like it. Good-morning, ma'am."

"Good-morning, sir; won't you stay to breakfast?" in liquid tones.

Herve declined staying to breakfast, and when he had saddled his horse, mounted and struck off toward the city. The thought of all he had done for his enemy *ought* to have made him happy; and yet the expression which sat upon his countenance throughout the ride was not happiness. Poor Herve! all that he had schemed for had come to pass, and for that reason he carried a heavy heart back to the city that day.

"What a selfish, ill-natured brute I am!" he exclaimed at length, and then he tried to banish the subject from his thoughts.

Kingsley endured his affliction with exemplary patience and resignation. He had comforting thoughts to assist him. Never before had he dared indulge in the hope of such a future as now presented itself to his mind as a certainty. The tall figure, with its gentle, gracious air, sat by his bedside in hours of rest or pain; and serene and tender eyes looked lovingly into his. Such were his dreams. No thought of how they should live disturbed him; no matter if it were as the birds of the air.

He remembered a quiet, thrifty village, an Arcadia of serenity and content; and one pretty cottage home, overshadowed by tall trees: *that* should be their home, and it were a pity if, with his talent, he could not find employment sufficient for their support. Ophelia was poor now; it would not be as if he took her from a downy nest to place her in a position less comfortable; nor had she any better prospect of amending her fortune.

He hurried to get well, and surprised Herve by making his appearance long before *he* had supposed it worth while to return for him. Having reported to his friend, he hastened to Ophelia. She entered his presence as chill and stately as before. He felt as if a north wind had struck him. He hurried to tell the story which was to instil life into the statue; which was to melt her frozen mood, and transform her into the tender, loving angel of his dreams. He sees that she trembles and turns paler, but her looks are averted. He awaits eagerly, but in patience, the sweet, the coveted answer which *must* come at last.

At length his suspense is ended. Coldly and calmly she makes her reply: "I thank you, Mr. Kingsley, for the honor you would confer upon me, but you will have to excuse me for begging leave to *decline.*"

He looked at her in silent amaze for a minute, but she did not raise her eyes. Suddenly she arose, as if on the point of leaving the room, when he arose also and said in strangely altered tones: "I am going, directly; but this is sudden! I was not expecting it! Will you not give me a reason for your decision?"

"I do not know that it is necessary, Mr. Kingsley. That I decline, with thanks, should be sufficient."

There was a sort of harshness in her tone, and unnatural hauteur in her manner. He said nothing more, but immediately left the room and the house. Left alone, Ophelia went to her room with a dead weight upon her heart. The tide of life seemed suddenly

come to an end. She sat down by the window, like one in a dream, and for one hour never stirred. The sun was setting in pomp, a funeral cortege drifted by; she observed nothing; she only felt that her happiness was wrecked for all time.

"Oh, my generous, but unwise friend, you know not what misery you have caused me!" was her first distinctly conscious plaint. "Because *you* loved me, you thought the whole world must love me. God help me! but I was right not to take advantage of his pitying mood, and thus bring toil and trouble upon his life."

But the thought of her self-sacrifice did not comfort her. She pitied herself; she mourned over and compassionated herself. It was martyrdom. She could more readily have given up her life than her love. But she had been made acquainted with the circumstances by which this affair had been brought about. She had been informed of the rencontre in the restaurant, the meeting, and the result, so far as had been discovered by the gentle gossip, her informant.

He had heard of her destitution, and come to relieve her want. The thought of pity, from *him*, maddened her.

She was terribly aroused. Her old opinions and her old conclusions and views dropped off like a useless garment. She saw her life, past, present and future, in its true light: her discontent, her bitterness and pride. So long as she scorned the employment by which she earned her daily bread, she could attain to no eminent degree of success. True dignity arose from respect. So long as she had no respect for her profession she could not be an adornment to it. All the noble persons whom she had ever known had been persons of usefulness, of industry and energy. How pitiable to whine and complain because she was forced to toil! How silly to consider an honorable vocation as an infliction and a means of humiliation, instead of thanking her

stars that she, who had been a worthless cumberer of the ground, had been driven into avenues of industry and usefulness. She looked back upon her past life of imbecility and weakness with shame and aversion, and determined that *now* she would go to work in earnest, and not sit down to whine and pule like a spoiled child.

When Kingsley had accustomed himself sufficiently to his mortifying defeat to speak of it with calmness, he acquainted Herve with the result. "It is all over," he said; "she refused me."

Herve looked at him in astonishment. "There must be some mistake," he exclaimed.

"No," returned Kingsley, firmly, "she evidently knew what she was doing. She declined point blank, and with a coldness which left no room for appeals,—even had I been disposed to make any, which I was not. I could never *persuade* a woman into marrying me, unless I thought her reluctance arose from a doubt of my sincerity, which could not have been in this case."

So these two lives, so irrevocably intertwined, outwardly drifted apart.

Ophelia procured a situation as music-teacher in a seminary—a position which filled the whole of her time with occupation, and left her no leisure for reflection. With one strenuous effort she had thrown off her discontent, and now took up the thread of her life, undismayed at the threatening future. She would grieve no more, lest thereby she should seem to question the justice and mercy of God.

In those meagre and sterile introductory chapters, you did not think that I would be so interesting, did you, John? You think me right entertaining and right pretty now, don't you?

You are a real good, nice, sensible John, and may draw your chair a little nearer, if you like. This is cozy; this is interesting!

I know of no greater pleasure, John, than that of expressing one's thoughts fully and fearlessly, with the positive assurance that if they do not meet with entire indorsement, they will at least encounter no ridiculous misconstructions nor malicious criticisms. Having the key to your mind, John, I know very well what you will disapprove, and I say as little of that as possible, I assure you.

Yet I grieve to say that I am sometimes possessed of a mischievous and impertinent spirit, which prompts me occasionally to utter some rather pert and provoking speeches merely to see how vexed you will be, or how patient. And I must say that you have borne the test with a nobility peculiarly masculine—that is, you have held your tongue.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FRUIT OF THE UPAS TREE.

RETURNING to his office one evening after a hard day's practice, Herve found Tom seated comfortably in a chair, with his feet upon another, reading the evening paper. (Not more than two months ago Tom, having bidden his brother a solemn farewell, had set forth for Chicago, where he was to make his fortune.) He nodded a sullen greeting as Herve entered, and then went on with his reading. He looked threadbare and forlorn.

Herve went quietly about his work without disturbing him. At length he threw his paper aside. "You don't seem to be very glad to see me," he said.

"What is the matter with your eye?" asked Herve, not seeming to have observed his remark.

"I had a fight with that fool, Curry. You needn't

look so cross; I wasn't going to stand like a dog and take all that fellow said, because he had a pocket full of money and plenty of friends. I'd have whipped him, too, if it hadn't been for one of his toadies."

"I wasn't going to blame you," returned Herve.

"You will have to find me another place here, Herve. It seems that misfortunes on top of misfortunes follow me. I have found nothing but selfishness and cruelty in this world. *Money* is the only key to the human heart, and I am more determined than ever to be rich. Have you any spare change, Herve? I will pay you back with interest when I at last get a good start."

Herve gathered up all the change he had about him, and gave it to his shabby brother. "There, Tom, go and get you a new suit. And, Tom, I must tell you my opinion of your past conduct. It is right that you should know what is in my mind concerning your behavior for the last few months."

Tom winced. "I know my own faults as well as any one, and I know my own intentions, though I never get any credit for the good I do. It has always been my misfortune to have enemies, who do all within their power against me."

"So long as you are governed by your own impulses and appetites, you will find the world full of 'selfishness and cruelty,' because, Tom, we are all prone to attribute the purposes and feelings of our own hearts to others. Deny yourself the indulgences that have been your ruin; devote yourself soberly and earnestly to any honorable pursuit within the range of your capabilities, and there is no doubt but you will in time obtain the fortune which you so much covet. On the contrary, continue in the course you have begun, and your life will be a continued train of misfortunes."

Tom fidgeted, but said nothing. He took his money and the rebuke with apparent resignation, but as he went off down the street he muttered, "The sanctified hypocrite! Wonderfully superior, because he happened

upon a streak of good luck in his profession. If I had only been educated to a profession! But it is too late now. However, I'll be even with him yet, and then we'll see who'll preach and dictate rules of decorum—as if I was a child, or an idiot!"

Meanwhile Herve was building high hopes for his brother, upon account of the subdued air with which he had received his admonition and advice. Herve followed the dictates of his own conscience, and guided his actions by its impulses; but it was a broader, a more magnanimous and healthy conscience than most people have. He need not have expected other persons whose consciences could have been wrapped in a dollar bill to be guided by the broad, wide-spreading, views originated in his own capacious mind.

Herve did what he could to help his brother into another position, and extracted a promise from him that he would refrain thereafter from intoxicating drinks, the observance of which Tom limited to his own discretion.

It is singular with what pertinacity people (not upheld by some fictitious support, or kept down by inevitable misfortunes) find their natural level. One man you may beat down, again and again, and each time he will rise, and at length overcome, and attain to a position beyond the reach of his malevolent assailants. Another you may elevate into a respectable place, and you will find him tumbling out of it as often as you may find yourself inclined to restore him to the unsuited position.

You will not be surprised to learn that Tom, in his haste to get rich, appropriated some of his employer's funds, and was unable to replace the sum before the matter was discovered; and Herve receives a pitiful note from some private place of confinement in which his brother begs him to send him five hundred dollars *immediately* to save him from disgrace.

Now we have seen how Herve, though of an extra-

ordinarily patient and long-suffering disposition, is a whirlwind in his wrath. "No," he returned, "you are a criminal, and it is but just that you should suffer."

Tom was not daunted by his brother's refusal, but begged a little more time, and sent a messenger to his father with a pitiful story of loss and misfortune, and the request that he would sign the inclosed "obligation," and thereby release him: said obligation calling for five hundred dollars, payable in one month, and placing his land in forfeit. Consternation reigned in the Hughes household; but the obligation was signed.

Mr. Hughes went to work to sell whatever portion of his possessions he could sacrifice with the least inconvenience. To *him*, who had plodded slowly up to his present position of bare competence, five hundred dollars was a vast sum, and the loss would entail upon them untold stinting and self-denial. But the honor of his family was of infinitely greater value than all other possessions.

Upon the payment of the money, Mr. Hughes required that his son should come home and remain a year. He sent the money to bear his expenses, and in due time Tom arrived at the hated "old prison," from which he had escaped some four or five years ago. He looked pale and worn with anxiety and dissipation —was extremely muddy and not over sober; so the cool greeting which he received, after his long absence, did not disturb him greatly. His mother burst into tears and left the room, his sisters eyed him disdainfully, and honest indignation shone in his father's eye though he said but little. What use to lecture a man who is half drunk?

For a few days Tom lounged about discontentedly, then proposed to start the distillery—which was idle this season—again. He had searched the place for brandy and found that every drop had been sold, and he *must* have *something*. He couldn't exist much longer in that place without some means of excitement.

"No," returned his father, "it has done harm enough; I shall burn it." And he set about applying a torch.

"Are you crazy?" exclaimed Tom. "Why don't you *sell* it, if you don't want to keep it up any longer yourself? *I'll* buy it, and pay you in two months."

"It has done harm enough, I tell you!" cried the old gentleman (how changed his tune since the opening of this volume). "I would give all I possess if it had never been built."

He burned the distillery, but that did not undo the mischief it had created. Too late he perceived the evil of which it was the sole source. But for it, this son, upon whose account his head was bowed with grief and shame, might have been an honor and a comfort to his old age.

Ah me! is it not a pity that good, sensible people must sometimes be "*driven* with stripes" into the right path! But for the weakness of this son, Mr. Hughes might have gone on to his dying day defending the distillery and sending forth strong drink, to assist in the mighty work of destruction which is going on throughout the whole land, but to a more fearful extent in his own State—Kentucky.

My ideas of political economy, as you may have discovered, are rather vague and indistinct, but had I the reins of the law in *my* hands for a short space, what a "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth" there would be, for a season, among the distillers, barkeepers and drunkards! And what an increase in the demand for pickaxes, and whatever other implements it takes to make passable highways out of the cow-paths and mud-lanes through which the inhabitants of some portions of this State are content to jog forever, rather than sacrifice the smallest portion of their personal property for a work that would benefit their neighbors, and even *strangers*, as much as themselves.

Tom still lives, and is patiently awaiting the demise

of his worthy parent, that he may re-erect the distillery and make that fortune which has continued to elude his grasp.

I could not wish every distiller the misfortune and unhappiness of this one; but, rather, that deep sympathy and brotherly love which is capable of personal sacrifices for public good.

"It is but a little evil that *my* distillery can do," exclaims the distiller whose eye may meet this page.

Sir, there is no such thing as a "little evil," in all this world. The smallest wrong is the germ from whence springs the giant evils; which in turn multiply and produce thousands of other evils like unto themselves.

"It is but a small affair," reasoned mother Eve, as she contemplated the forbidden fruit, "a very small affair, this, which the great Lord has forbidden us, and there can be no harm in merely *tasting* what it is that is denied us." And so a world was plunged into a sea of miseries, from whence only the agony and death of a God could deliver it.

With what pleasure and relief must these parents have turned to their other son, their temperate, industrious, noble-hearted Herve!

I must acknowledge that Herve oftentimes grew restless, moody and irritable; grew impatient with the ingratitude and greed with which his kindness and charity were sometimes met, and felt, within his heart, that his lot was hard. But the hardest of his trials was that infinite famine of heart induced by unrequited love.

Herve was designed for a philanthropist, a benefactor of his race. Had he obtained the love of his worshiped "saint," and married her, do not you perceive that—unless he had been disappointed in her, and consequently miserable—he must have been so absorbed in his excessive love for her that there would have been but little of him left for the exercise of good

works? Physically speaking, women are seldom gluttonous; spiritually, they are cormorants. Was ever a woman loved enough? The feminine heart cries continually "give, give." Artemisia, who had her beloved husband's remains reduced to powder and swallowed them, only typifies the characteristic greediness of the sex.

Thus, it was a good thing for Herve that he was disappointed in his first excessive devotion, and that he met the lady-like Miss Moffit (the pretty dressmaker, you remember) during Ophelia's illness; and that he turned to her for comfort when his dear love had gone. It is needless to relate the progress of their acquaintance. Herve's heart was always open to tender pity, and turned always from the proud and fortunate to the gentle and lowly; even Ophelia had been disregarded while she lived in comfort and affluence.

He related the story of his first, unfortunate love: "was his wounded heart worth the having?" She was silent, but the blush on her cheek spoke for her. Further urged, she confessed that nothing, in her estimation, was good enough to deserve such a heart. So it was settled, and I doubt not that Herve's domestic life is as free from discord, and as peaceful and happy, as ever falls to the lot of ordinary mortals.

I know that I shall make many enemies by expressing so freely my aversion to drinking habits, drinking characters and drink-factories. But, John, I am so often made to feel grieved and sorrowful in behalf of the helpless victims of this Giant Curse, that I care but little for the displeasure of others, if I may but lend the smallest assistance in freeing the land from its pernicious and fatal influences; influences which crush the very life—the *spiritual* life—out of many miserable unfortunates who otherwise might have made honorable and useful members of society.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

STRUGGLING AGAINST THE INEVITABLE.

OPHELIA returned from her teaching, in the vacation, considerably fatigued and worn in body, but serene in mind. Mrs. Harper, who had continued her friend throughout her cloudy as well as sunny days, called at her boarding-house with a pressing invitation that she should spend the summer with *her:* as neither would be able to leave the city during the season, why not spend it together? Ophelia had no objections to offer, and immediately transferred herself and baggage to the more commodious and inviting apartments of her friend.

She also received a similar invitation from Dr. Hughes and his wife, which was declined, with thanks. Now, for the sake of truth, it must be confessed that Ophelia felt a *little* vexed that Herve had found it such an easy matter to console himself, after exhibiting such signs of unhappiness at her refusal. Bereft of all her lovers, Ophelia began to think that perhaps she had been too hasty, or too conscientious, or too *something;* and yet, considering the matter over, she could not but confess that, under the same circumstances, her actions would be the same as in the past.

She made no inquiries concerning Kingsley. She felt too comfortably indifferent in regard to that gentleman, to have any wish for further knowledge of his movements. She only hoped that he was absent from the city. But he was *not* absent from the city, and the first time she appeared in public, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Harper, she met him with Louise Benton on his arm, his face radiant with enjoyment.

He bowed carelessly to the party, and passed on.

What immense damage one little glance can work! The old love sprang up, and asserted itself to be still alive,—*vividly* alive.

"That will be another happy match," said Mrs. Harper, when they had passed; "Kingsley and Louise Benton. Had you heard of it, Ophelia?"

No, Ophelia had not heard of it; and so Mrs. Harper related all the particulars which she had gathered from the gossips, and kept Ophelia's heart upon the rack until they were ready to return home.

"Haven't we spent a pleasant evening, Ophelia?" she said, as they entered the house. And Ophelia was obliged to say "Yes," and agree to "go out often," at her friend's request. Then she crept up to her room to have a battle with herself. How hard was this angelic nature to subdue!

They "went out" often, and everywhere met Kingsley,—sometimes with Louise Benton, sometimes alone. One evening he stopped them and proposed to relieve Mr. Harper of one of the ladies, offering his arm to Ophelia. She took it reluctantly. A fierce resentment against him rose in her heart, because of his power over her. She tried to look indifferent, but could not. "It is warm in here," she said, pushing her hair back from her forehead with an impatient hand.

"Should you like a walk? you do not care for *these* things?" (They were at an "Orphans' Fair.")

"I have no objections," she returned, "only we will have some difficulty in finding Mrs. Harper, if we leave here."

"I do not know that it is imperatively necessary that we should find Mrs. Harper," he replied. "I can take you home, if you will allow me that honor."

Out upon the street, away from the watchful crowd, his manner changed completely. What sort of a tangled web was he weaving? Here he was now,—the accepted lover of Louise Benton,—who, at other times, had taken particular pains to display his utter indiffer-

ence to *her*, looking deep into her eyes as if from thence he drew the light of his life. How could she have been so deceived in him? It was not possible that *he* could be guilty of premeditated wrong.

It was a spiritual face, singularly free from all traces of vicious or trivial thought, and containing a greater range of expression than is accorded to many. It bore the truthful, honest expression of one who hated falsehood; and yet Ophelia looked upon it with a stronger sensation of *fear* than she had ever experienced in her whole life before. Her faith in him, and in herself, was terribly shaken. Could it be that he did not love Louise, and that he was entering into an alliance entirely distasteful to him? This thought, once having taken possession of her mind, was not to be dispossessed, and, in spite of her judgment, she began to think that, after all, perhaps he loved her yet.

"Oh, dear!" she thought, as she listened to his incipient love confessions, "how are we to know, in this deceiving world, whether a man is in earnest or only amusing himself?"

And while she debated the matter, the tender love-blossoms, which she thought absence and his coldness and neglect had killed, were slowly unfolding their petals again. His words, though mythical, breathed *love*, and the prudent Ophelia's replies were not less entertaining. She had an idea that she was saying some extraordinary things,—something she ought not to say, perhaps. But this tide of thought and feeling had been accumulating too long to be restrained by a power that was as frail as the Philistines' withes.

Ophelia went home as happy as a fool; but her happiness, founded upon *nothing*, was destined to be of short standing; and when Kingsley failed to call, as was expected of him, and failed to pay her any more attention, Ophelia's airy chateau tumbled to the ground. If this sort of treatment was meant to subdue her pride, and humble her egotistic spirit into the very dust, it

succeeded. When she was chilled to death almost, he returned as genial and fascinating as ever; and this sudden change, from formality to friendliness, from chilling distance to winning nearness, completely conquered her stubborn will. She could never tell what sort of treatment she was to receive, nor could she any longer resist the influence of his manner, which made her happy or miserable according as he willed.

And now began the hardest struggle which it had yet been her misfortune to know,—"that pitiful coiling and recoiling, and self-involved returns of a sickening famine and thirst of heart" which, we are told, "if rightly placed, gives life, and wrongly placed, wastes it away."

The time had come now when she had no further control over her own heart. She was as a leaf twirled by the storm. Oh, how morose and unhappy she grew! how solitary and unsocial in her habits! But she held fast to her faith in the goodness of God. Must not we, who receive good at his hand, receive also evil?

No one—not even Kingsley—knew the extent of her unhappiness, for Ophelia had a deceiving face, a face that spoke of peace when there was no peace, that looked bright when her very soul was in "sackcloth and ashes." As for confession, she would have died rather than let her love be known by word or action. And yet, one night, when left alone with her own thoughts, she felt an overpowering necessity for unburdening her mind. Oh, if *her friend* had only lived! But regrets were unavailing. Suddenly a sweet, sad face, the face of one whose trials had been greater than hers, arose in her mind,—an associate teacher, Miss Hartley. In this lady she could place implicit confidence. She would write to Miss Hartley.

She sat down and poured out her whole soul in one full, free confession of her love for Kingsley,—her belief in his continued affection for her, and her fears

that she had lost him forever. If he loved another woman, then she would willingly give him up,—not only willingly but *gladly;* but if he married without love, then she should forever blame herself for the unhappiness that would be sure to ensue. How ignorant! —how stupidly blind she had been! And how ignorant and blind yet! She related minutely and truthfully the story of their love. She wanted sympathy and she wanted advice; and throughout the whole letter was perceivable her despairing desire for his love.

When she had finished, Ophelia felt almost happy, there was such a calm upon her spirit. The stormy mood had spent itself, the surging passions which had so long controlled her had worn themselves aweary, and she felt peaceful and almost content. Already she felt the balm of sympathy, so soothing to the wounded heart, which her messenger would bring.

Treacherous, treacherous messenger! How was she to know that the innocent-looking missive, to which she had intrusted her heart's secret, instead of consolation was to bring her the deepest humiliation and shame she had ever known?

The vacation was almost gone before she ceased to look for a reply; she still wrestled alone with her love, and yielded to it when there was no other alternative. Through the day she kept her mind employed, but as the weird twilight came on with its sombre lights and shadows, it brought with it another less manageable mood. The eager dark eyes that were wont to dip into her thoughts, whether she willed or no, came with the shadows and forced her to feel their power.

Kingsley was not *quite* stone-blind, and he began to perceive that his presence produced a little more effect than formerly. He saw that his rare visits were a little more appreciated. He knew, when he stayed away longer than usual, how she was longing to see him. He stayed away on purpose that she might grow more eager. He could fancy her coming into the pretty

parlor with her quick step, and her half-shy, half-pleased smile, in haste to be with him, and yet half afraid. He measured the increase of power by his own heart-dial, and when he could stay away no longer he went. It was all new ground to him; and he began to understand how, in the school of love, the man is always the teacher, the woman the obedient or rebellious pupil.

"I suppose you have heard the report," he said, one evening during a brief call, "of my approaching marriage?"

"Yes," she returned, rather faintly. Though she wanted him married and out of her way, she was not quite ready to face the fact with a cheerful countenance. "I am very glad," she added, feeling an imminent necessity for saying something, "if you truly love her, and"—— He was looking at her so earnestly, and her face was turning red and telling on her; so she broke down and looked about as foolish as it was possible for Ophelia to look.

"But I *do not* love her!"

She lifted her eyes in amazed reproof. "Then you should not marry her."

"I do not intend to marry her," he returned, smiling slightly. "It is true Miss Louise Benton is to be married in a very short time, but I am not the happy man. It is my cousin. You remember to have heard me speak of Reade Kingsley. It is he. He has loved Louise a long time, though he has seen her but seldom. It was for his sake, though I liked Louise too, that I was with her so much."

There was something peculiar in his manner upon this evening, something she could not understand. He seemed preoccupied, and yet his manner was too gentle, too *satisfied*, to contain the slightest degree of hostile feeling.

When he arose to go, which was very early, he inquired if she had any engagement for the following

afternoon, and would she accompany him in a drive? Ophelia could think of nothing to detain her, and he seemed entirely satisfied with her cool assent.

The drive was into the country, along a beautiful road; at least it appeared beautiful to Kingsley and his companion, and would have appeared so under any circumstances.

"I received, oh, the *sweetest* letter that was ever written, a few evenings ago," he said, as they trotted along the shady road. "I know you never, in all your life, received a letter which made you so happy."

"From whom was it, pray?" inquired Ophelia, in a slightly injured tone.

"It was from the dead-letter office," he returned.

Ophelia looked at him in some surprise, and he continued: "It was written *by* a lady, and *to* a lady; but *my* name was the only one mentioned in full, and so it was returned to me—having, from some cause, failed of its destination."

Ophelia's eyes dilated, and a startled look came into them. "Who were the ladies?" she inquired, in a faltering tone.

"From the signature, it seemed that the writer's name was *Ophelia*,—the lady addressed, Miss Ida Hartley."

The mischievous expression in Kingsley's eye changed to one of alarm when he perceived the effect of his words upon his companion. The blood suddenly rushed to her face and dyed it crimson, then as suddenly receded, leaving her deathly pale. She clutched feebly at the side of the buggy, but missed it, and fell heavily forward.

Kingsley caught her, and held her in his arms without an idea of what he was to do with her. He was terribly alarmed. She might be dead! How cruel and thoughtless in him to tell her so suddenly! Oh, what a fool he was! and in the midst of his stormy self-reproaches and regrets, looking into the pale, expression-

less face, he yielded to the impulse of the moment and kissed her. The fervor of that kiss awoke her, and she sat up, with a look of alarm that almost equaled his own. Kingsley was too deeply relieved to feel awkward; and when she drew herself up with an attempt at her old dignity, he looked wicked and inquired if she were liable to these spells, and offered to hold her again, that she might not fall entirely out next time; said he was not near through yet, that there was something more trying still she would have to hear, and that really he had better get a good hold in time.

Ophelia was too deeply abased in her own eyes to be brought to smile, and only drew herself as far away from him as she could, and looked greatly distressed.

"Ophelia," he said, turning serious at length, "you must not let that letter distress you, for it made me very happy. And if you continue to regret it so deeply, I shall think that, after all, it meant nothing, but was only a little fiction, designed to amuse your friend."

As they neared home, Ophelia regained somewhat of her usual serenity. "Of course, Mr. Kingsley," she said, in her firm, decisive tone, "you will discontinue your visits. You can understand how awkward a continuation of the acquaintance would be to me, under the circumstances."

He looked at her in some surprise, but as they were driving up before Mrs. Harper's door, he only replied, "Certainly; it shall be just as you wish, after to-morrow. I must have your permission for one more visit to-morrow evening."

Ophelia gave her consent, and, bidding him "good evening," hurried into the house. She was deeply agitated. Alone in her room, she walked about in an excited manner, trembling violently. What, in Heaven's name, must he think of her? If he should vow, by all that was sacred, that he loved her, how could she believe it now? How was she to know that it was not pity, gratified vanity, or a sudden fancy, induced

by the circumstances? She sat down by the window and tried to recall the contents of the fatal letter; but she could only remember the mood under which it was written,—the reckless, despairing, almost distracted mood.

The evening came at last, and Ophelia, in spite of her brisk walk through shady streets,—her shopping, calling, and various methods for getting rid of her superfluous excitement,—entered the room where Mr. Kingsley awaited her, in a nervous tremor. She sat down by the window, far away from him; but he was not long in reducing the distance to a very short space.

A radiant content pervaded his countenance and manner. He appeared in such perfect command of himself,—and that he had rarely appeared before,—so sublimely at ease with himself and all the world, that Ophelia observed him with involuntary wonder.

It is useless to repeat all that was said,—much nonsense upon both sides, no doubt, for people are not supposed to be in the full possession of all their mental faculties upon such occasions. Kingsley reasoned with the fluency of one who is confident as to the result. Ophelia struggled faintly against the encroaching influence which was subjecting her will to a stronger power, but finally yielded. He was not slow in taking possession of his property, after the usual manner of lovers; and Ophelia, half frightened, half pleased, not knowing which to do, laugh or cry, compromised the matter and did a little of both.

"I am so happy, Ophelia," said Kingsley, "that I feel puffed up with pride at the thought of having your love. I have been a complete egotist ever since I received that letter, which you did not know you were writing to me. Scold me, Ophelia, and make me feel small. Tell me of some ill-natured things you have been thinking of me, for I feel the need of some sort of ballast to this overplus of happiness. Like Philip of Macedon, who, overwhelmed with victories and

success, prayed the gods to make haste and send him some *small* misfortune, I *fear* the favor of fickle Fortune. It seems a perilous thing to be too happy."

"That is no rule by which to judge the decrees of an all-wise Providence," said Ophelia. "If we receive punishment, it is because we stand in need of discipline. If we receive happiness, it is a gift of God, and does not portend sorrow any more than sunny weather portends a storm."

"I am so unworthy of you, Ophelia," he said. "You do not know what a miserable sinner I am!"

"Have been, perhaps," she replied. "You have the future in your own hands. You do not love vice, I am sure."

"I hate, I loathe it!" he exclaimed, vehemently. "And then I am very poor, Ophelia; I can offer you but an humble house."

"I have learned the blessing of a simple, unpretentious life," was her reply. "I have no longer the smallest desire for wealth."

When the ten o'clock bells sounded, Kingsley protested against being sent away, according to her usual custom; but Ophelia was inexorable. Like the majority of engaged young ladies, she was not loth to take up the reins, in the brief interval of courtship, and drive as willfully and recklessly as women generally drive when they have the chance.

He arose to take his leave, but the "good-night" was to be no common-place affair. Ophelia looked a little awe-struck at his assurance. He placed his hand lightly upon her waist, and bent his lips to hers in a slight and momentary pressure. Then he was gone, even before she could summon the courage to look up and see what sort of an expression there might be upon his face.

For awhile she sat still, waiting for the vibration of that light touch to die away; until the sound of coming footsteps aroused her, when, shrugging her shoulders in

a sort of self-contempt, she hastened to her own room. She slept lightly that night, and the sense of a soothing presence mingled with all her dreams. Morning and returning consciousness brought with them the vivid, eloquent glances of dark eyes, which flooded her whole being with a strangely perceptible and yet unutterable serenity.

"Sensuous!—purely sensuous!" she exclaimed, with a petulant shrug of her shoulders. But a minute after she was kneeling in the sweet dawn to thank the Almighty God for his goodness to her, and to beseech his forgiveness for her past distrust of him. He had taken care of her when she had not merited his care. While she was complaining of trials she was forced to endure, he had been ordering all things for her good.

She had only followed the blind, shallow instincts of the whole human race in doubting whatever she could not see with her own eyes. It is a characteristic of mankind to elevate their own judgment to an equality, oftentimes *above* that of their Maker. God created the universe: man can *create* nothing. Measure their moral attributes by the same ratio, and man is to God as a dot to a globe that would fill all space.

Ophelia looked back upon her season of trial with feelings of thankfulness. Her enforced march over rough places had developed a more reliable and enduring strength. Kind parent! He had seen her need of discipline, and bestowed it, notwithstanding her reluctance. She had now the strength to endure much uncomplainingly, for she began to perceive the incalculable good to be derived from suffering. Ill weeds grow apace in the sunny weather, as well as the fruit, and unless there is a careful gardener the sunshine develops more evil than good.

Both were better for the trials through which they had gone, and their love was all the stronger for having endured the test of the refiner's crucible. She desired no better fate than this,—to have his love, to have

the right to love him in return. This was better than wealth or fame.

Are you saying to yourself, John, that people are interesting only in books? that, in real life, they are seldom anything but shallow and insipid?

Oh, no, John! You have too little faith in the capabilities of humanity. Oftentimes, no doubt, you have been thrown in direct contact with the deepest of natures unawares; and while you sighed for a sympathy more profound than the ordinary associations of life afford, you have overlooked and passed unsounded a nature as vast and illimitable as the sea, because the mere surface gave no hint of unusual depth.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MONOMANIAC.

Mr. North, having become more engrossed in business matters than ever, after his marriage, was increasing his wealth and importance at a very rapid rate. Personally he was not much liked, but it is rarely possible for human nature to maintain indifference towards a prospective millionaire.

But suddenly there came a crash, and the firm of "North, Biglow and Co." lay in ruins. I know not how it came. I understand so little of business matters that the process by which people are reduced from affluence to penury is but vaguely shadowed forth in my mind. But, notwithstanding it appeared so massive, there must have been something insecure in the structure; things of good foundation and solid build are not wont to tumble down.

There were murmurs and execrations from the unfor-

tunates who were involved in the loss, including most of the clerks of the establishment; and dark hints of unrighteous ways and general rottenness were whispered abroad. Corruption had begun in one little spot: but that little spot was the core of the establishment, the head of the firm,—North; and rapidly the infection spread to the junior members, to the clerks and supernumeraries, until the whole structure was in an unsound state; then it fell.

The fractured firm fell into odium about town, as fractured things are apt to do, and after trying, vainly, to secure a new footing in L——,they all scattered abroad to begin anew in other places. North was the last to go. It was thought that he bore up under his loss better than any, he gave so little sign of discomfiture. Many who had been his most flattering friends in prosperity now publicly neglected him, and others shook him cordially by the hand, condoled with him on his loss, inquired into the particulars, but made no offer of assistance.

All these things he seemed to bear with stolid indifference; but the hardest trial of all was the kindness of Kingsley, whom, in his prosperity, he had hated. When Kingsley, who wore an air of good fortune and prosperity, offered to use his power with the press in his behalf, or any other power he chanced to possess, he gave signs of high indignation, and declined the proffered kindness in most offensive terms.

Who can picture the frenzy of the gold-worshiper when he sees his carefully-hoarded treasures swept away as by a single blast? His god was gone! For it he had toiled, early and late, and from it was all the strength and power of his position derived. It had forsaken him, and he had no strength left. What use to toil and strive for that which had wings no power on earth could fetter, and which might, at any moment, take flight? His whole life had suddenly tumbled into ruins. All hope was gone; and when the human mind is bereft of all hope, disease has begun upon it.

He moved his family into smaller quarters, and then began business upon a smaller scale, but it seemed as if his good luck, like his hollow friends, had deserted him in the hour of his adversity. For awhile he struggled with his concealed misery and disappointment, made fourfold the harder to endure by the discontent and reproaches of his proud wife, who, having possessed nothing to lose, made all the louder outcry.

He grew peevish and cynical under continued misfortune; and the rebuffs of friends, who had been all smiles in the time of good fortune, aroused within him fierce resentment. *Bought* friendship, my dear North, is proverbially insecure. What a pity you had not exercised better judgment in the selection of your friends, that *now* you might not be left to breast the storm alone!

"Let us go away from here!" exclaimed his wife, exasperated by neglect and odious patronage; "*anything* is better than this! I'd rather be where there was not a single human being. Let us go west."

So he gathered up his household chattels, and, taking his wife and two children, shook the dust of civilization from off his feet. He would get him away from the world which reviled him,—away from all human kind! out of their hearing, out of their reach!

A week of travel brought the wanderers to a straggling village upon the outskirts of Kansas. But there was a semblance of civilization here, and Oliver North had come to hate his fellow-creatures to that extent that rational beings were not endurable. However, he was not long in finding a house to his taste: a log hut set upon a wide plain, which bore no other traces of the hand of man. They crammed the provisions and furniture which they had brought with them into the hut, and their life of solitude began.

He had brought a horse, some farming implements, and a book on agriculture; with these he went to work. He was awkward and unsuccessful at first, but a desperate determination conquers all things. His desire

for riches was dead. Merely enough to keep life in their bodies would suffice: what use to accumulate for the little span of life that was left? for he felt, as did David in *his* misfortunes, that there was but a *step* between him and his grave.

It was a broad field for one pair of hands to till alone. A vast sea of unbroken soil, it seemed to stretch away into infinity upon all sides. A hollow dome of silence and emptiness spread above it. No "world" here! He was away from it at last. The great naked plain had an awful fascination for him. Sometimes he would stop his work, sit down upon his plow, and watch the monotonous landscape, which had stood the same, perhaps, since time began; and which, he sometimes fancied, watched *him*.

He was not *alone* as he stood solitary upon the prairie. *Within* were tormentors, who whipped and lashed his conscience with remembrance of past misdeeds. What faces were these which rose up and mocked at him? The faces of the poor whom it had been his place to comfort and protect, but whom he had oppressed for gain.

His eye reached abroad for some object of diversion. It swept the horizon: not a grasshopper! not a fly! Sometimes, after long hours of waiting in the brooding stillness, a startled look came into his face, as if he fancied the long-expected presence was about to be made visible; and his breath came short and quick in excited expectancy. But when the day began to decline, and *nothing* answered his eager vigil, he would shake his fist at the unchanging plain and give vent to his excited fancy in frenzied soliloquy.

The brooding, watchful silence was hideous to this uneasy, lonely mind, which, having no outward material to feed upon, turned inward and fed upon itself. No wonder that he sometimes fled when no man pursued. At length he grew to hate the naked, staring prairie, from whence sprang his horrible visions.

But wherever he turned, it was there!

He had no love for his wife, nor she for him. In their days of ease and luxury there had been no affection between them; she had her children, and that sufficed for her; he had his gold, and that sufficed for him. Now that her children were forced to endure the hardships of poverty, she hated *him* as the author of their misfortunes; and now that *his* idol was gone, he loved nothing, and began to hate the wife and children who tied him to this accursed spot. But for them he might go back to the world and start afresh.

One night he dreamed that he had murdered them. In the pale dawn he awoke and looked upon his sleeping charges. Why not kill them as they slept? His wife was a *pious* woman; she read her Bible and said her prayers, and of such, he supposed, were the kingdom of heaven. The children were innocent; a life of sin and misery lay before them, from which it would be a blessing to spare them. He called to mind all he had heard of the delights of that celestial city to which the sacred dead were taken; the golden streets, the crystal streams, the peaceful scenes; no more sorrowing *there*. Could he provide for his family better than by sending them to that happy place?

He placed his hands upon his head, and calmly reasoned the matter over. How strange that no other man had thought of this easy solution of a toiling, struggling life! But it mattered not; *he* needed no precedent; he had always based his actions upon his own convictions, and he saw no reason why he should not in this instance. Had his mind ever been clearer? his reasoning powers in better condition?

Yes, he would kill them, his resolution was fixed at last. He crept to the bureau, and from one of the drawers took a small dirk, whose blade glistened in the dim light. He placed his hand firmly upon his wife's throat, and drew back to strike, when her eyes flew open with a wild look of alarm.

"Do not fear," he said calmly, "I am going to do you a great favor; one for which you will presently thank me. I am going to send you to heaven; that beautiful, delightful place. What! not want to go! Was there ever such ingratitude? How she struggles. But she *shall* go! No more weeping there, sweet wife. No more crying for jewels, and fine clothes, and fretting the whole day long. Ah, she is dead, at last!"

His eyes sparkled as of one frenzied with joy. He laughed a wild, loud laugh, which awoke the two children. The eldest sat up, and, looking about with vague horror, began to cry. He seized them both, and with an iron clutch upon each of their little throats, held them down until their eyes sprang from the sockets, their tongues protruded, and their innocent faces blackened. When they lay *quite* still, he stood up and contemplated his work with a glaring, unsatisfied eye.

How horrible the scene! As he looked at the distorted faces a sudden fear seized him. He searched the whole room minutely; there was no one there. Then he lit a torch, and set fire to the bed upon which his dead lay. When he saw the flames creeping around the corpses, he proceeded methodically to gather up his best clothes, his wife's jewels, and some provisions, and pack them into a valise.

By the time he had accomplished this the house was in flames, and he started hurriedly to the little shed where he kept his only horse. He saddled it, fastened on his valise, and mounting, started briskly over the prairie. The sun was up, and a brazen wall glittered in the east. What a strange sky! Was it the reflection of his burning wife and children? He turned and looked back, almost expecting to see their bodies ascending from the funeral pile.

Hold! what was that prowling in the yard? A spy! But he should not spy long. There should be no witnesses left upon the earth to bring this thing to light. He would steal back and kill this skulking prowler.

He fastened his horse to a hazel-twig, and stealthily approached the house. But there was no one there. It was only the old pump, from which he had daily drawn water. He had forgotten the old pump. He set fire to it, too, and to the horse's shed. The strong winds which swept the prairie would soon sweep the ashes away, and there would be nothing left to tell the tale. He forgot the bones! He watched his little home crumble into ashes, and then set his face toward the east.

At noon he came to a strip of timber, with a small stream running through it. Here he watered his horse, tied up his bridle so that he might graze, and sat down to his own dinner. His morning's work had made him ravenous, and he ate voraciously. Suddenly the sharp report of a gun or pistol rang upon the air. He sprang to his feet, hastened in the direction of the sound, and saw a man picking up a squirrel from the ground.

"What are you doing here?" he asked of the man.

"I *live* here," was the quiet rejoinder.

"Where is your house?"

The man pointed to a little hut of skins at some distance. "I was tired of life," he said; "I came here to be alone, that I might disturb no one with my misery."

"Tired of life! And if you were to die, perhaps you would be more miserable still; you might go to hell!"

"There is no such place as hell," returned the hermit. "The canting hypocrites say there is a hell, to scare you into joining their church, and contributing to their comfort and glory. God is a merciful God. He punishes us here on earth, but hereafter he administers no punishments. I am not afraid that I shall not be saved when I die."

"You are sure that you will go to that beautiful place called heaven?"

"I am sure that God will make me happy in the next world."

"Foolish, foolish man!" exclaimed the madman; "then why do you continue to live in this world of strife and confusion? But rejoice! for your miseries are now at an end:" and he snatched out his dirk and stabbed him.

"Oh, God, have mercy on my soul!" shrieked the man, and fell down and died.

The methodical madman searched his victim's pockets, and found a gold watch and a slim pocket-book, both of which he transferred to his own. Then he hurried back to his horse, and, after gathering up the fragments of his dinner, set forth again toward the east. The wood seemed, to his excited fancy, to resound with shrieks, but he gathered up the last morsel before starting.

As he galloped madly across the plain, the instinct of carnage was upon him. Blood, blood, human blood alone, would satiate his thirst! Away to the crowded marts of civilization, where there were millions of beating hearts to stifle, millions of unsatisfied souls to send forth into the vague unknown! On, on he urged his horse, until the poor beast staggered; a few steps farther, and it falls, dying. He unstrapped his valise, and hurried on afoot.

Wearied with continued exertion and weakened by famine, he at last arrived at Fort Scott. Here, after satisfying his hunger, he took the cars and sped away towards St. Louis. There he exchanged his dusty clothes for those he carried in his valise, sold the valise and old clothes to one of the waiters at the hotel, and then sallied forth, looking his old, pompous self again, to dispose of his jewels.

On the street he met an old acquaintance, and seemed very glad to see him. He related his misfortunes to his acquaintance, who condoled with him and expressed it as his opinion that this life was a miserable affair, at best, and that the sooner we got through with it the better.

"I agree with you there," returned North; and immediately set about decoying him into a stable, where he stabbed him.

"Here is another soul!" he said to the Invisible as the man gave his last gasp. He hunted up the stable-keeper, to whom he said, "Strange cattle you keep in your stalls; did you know there was a dead man in that last one?"

"No!" exclaimed the stable-keeper, incredulously.

North coolly exhibited his victim, and advised the stable-keeper to report to the authorities immediately. While this was being done and a crowd gathering, North made his way to the wharf, crossed the river in the ferry-boat, and took passage on the first train for the east.

The first person he met upon arriving at L—— was Ripley. Ripley was much stouter than of yore, and bore about him an air of sleek and complacent prosperity. He pretended not to recognize North, and was about to pass him; but North stepped resolutely before him and offered his hand. "How goes the world with you?" was his greeting.

"Oh, prosperously, happily!" returned Ripley, complacently.

North's countenance fell. "You are not married?"

"Married! Oh, yes," said Ripley, briskly; "some time since! Do you remember Fischer, the wealthy iron-foundry man? I married his daughter."

"Indeed! and what has become of Ophelia Berges?"

"Regret to say I have no idea," replied Ripley, carelessly. "I believe I saw her at the opera with Kingsley some time ago; no doubt *he* can inform you."

"And you do not know where she's staying? perhaps she's married?"

"Why?" interrogated Ripley, sarcastically. "Are you a widower?"

"I am," returned North, mournfully. "My wife and both of the children died of fever in Kansas; a

terrible fever that burned them up. But they are much better off where they are."

"Ah, I had not heard," said Ripley, looking at him curiously. "That was unfortunate indeed! You will have to excuse me now, North. I should be delighted to talk to you longer, but business is pressing. I have an engagement at ten, and it is past that now. By the way, I believe I heard some one say that Ophelia was staying at Harper's, on B—— street, you remember."

North turned and looked after him as he sped away.

"*One* happy man in the world," he soliloquized. "Let him live—let the fool live! I find no pleasure in molesting flies. I am not a wicked murderer. I only send the souls of the unhappy to a place of rest. I am a philanthropist; I have taken into my hands a great work for the world—that of ridding it of the miserable, and of depositing their souls into a place of eternal happiness. But it is a very, very ungrateful world."

That afternoon he called on Ophelia. "Why, it is Mr. North!" she exclaimed, after looking at him a few moments with a puzzled expression.

"Yes," he replied, in a sad tone, "it is Mr. North."

She was the same Ophelia, only a little thinner, and a little more cordial in her manner. Old memories came trooping back to the warped and unsettled mind. His face softened, and the glittering eye grew dreamy and abstracted. He threw himself upon the divan, and sat for a long time without saying a word. Ophelia interrupted his reverie by inquiring after his family.

"My family!" he started strangely. "They are all dead!"

"Poor fellow!" thought Ophelia; "no wonder he acts strangely."

She expressed her sympathy with great feeling.

"I have had a hard time of it," he said in reply. "You have no idea how hard. Those prairies nearly killed me."

He seemed to be conscious that there was something wrong in his actions, and occasionally begged her to excuse him; said that ill health and trouble had nearly driven him mad.

"Ah, Ophelia, if you had been true to me, nothing of this would have happened. I would still have been a prosperous man. If you would love me now, Ophelia, all would be well. I would soon be rich again. You are not going to marry any one else?"

Ophelia was obliged to confess that she *was*.

"Who is it?" he inquired, eagerly; "Kingsley?"

She admitted that it was Kingsley.

"Indeed!" he exclaimed, with animation, "I always liked Kingsley. Where is he boarding? I should like to call on him. I *always* liked Kingsley, you know."

Ophelia did not say that she did *not* know he had always liked Kingsley, but gave him the desired address: after which he took his departure. "How strange he is!" she said, as she stood by the window, looking after him with a puzzled countenance. "And I was once to have been that man's wife!"

She shuddered involuntarily, then laughed and ran up-stairs to tell Mrs. Harper of her singular offer.

Kingsley was very much surprised at receiving a visit from Mr. North. "He looks badly and acts strangely," he said to Ophelia the evening after. "It seems that Kansas did not agree with him."

"Poor fellow," said Ophelia; "his wife and children died out there."

"They did?" exclaimed Kingsley, in surprise. "He did not tell me of that. If I am not much mistaken, he told me they were all well. I never liked North."

"I *did*, once upon a time," returned Ophelia, with a smile.

Her lover frowned. "You never cared very much for him, Ophelia, I am sure of that."

"No, and if I had *known* him, I should not have cared even so much as I did."

If they could only have seen the subject of their conversation glaring upon them through the thin lace curtain of the parlor window, and heard his soliloquy as he hurried along the street!

"Shall I kill *him*, and send his soul into an eternity of bliss? No! she would pity him, and mourn over him, and love him more than ever. It would be murder, too, to send an unwilling soul to judgment; and I am no murderer. No! his fate shall be worse than death. He shall live, separated from her forever—an outlaw! a condemned criminal!"

He slackened his pace, and his head drooped upon his breast in deep reflection. "Poor old Norton!" he muttered, at length, "Who ever pitied *him* while he lived? Who ever found anything in him to praise or admire until he was dead? Dead by the murderer's hand! *Then* what a caucus of notabilities over his carcass! what a gathering of the nations to see the martyred innocent! How his meagre virtues were magnified! how many which he had never possessed were attributed to him! *He* had been a rich man, too, and unfortunate. No, no! *I* must be the martyr! I'll send forth my own soul in search of those liberated from this vile life by my own hand. But Kingsley must suffer for it; is he better than I, that he should have what I, in my best days, never possessed—happiness? *I'll* rectify this wrong!"

He slept none that night, but wandered up and down the street until a policeman suggested that he had better get himself indoors. Then he went to his hotel, and sat pondering the matter until dawn. The thought of wreaking vengeance upon the man who had succeeded where he had failed swallowed up all remembrance of his philanthropic work of weeding the world of unhealthy souls. *This* was an individual scheme, and over-topped the former, as all *personal* affairs rise above general, in the mind of the selfish.

The day following he spent in talking with whoever

of his acquaintances he could get to listen to him. To each he said: "And so Kingsley and Ophelia Berges are to be married. He is not worthy of her;" and hinted darkly of the things which he could divulge, to Kingsley's eternal ruin, if he was so minded.

"Perhaps I ought to tell Ophelia," he would say, "though she treated me very shabbily once. Kingsley is a sly, cunning scoundrel! Perhaps I'll tell her yet."

About nine o'clock that night he called on Kingsley at his room; found him reading; laid aside his hat and seated himself, at Kingsley's invitation, and talked very fluently,—advancing some rather odd ideas. For awhile Kingsley, though not disposed to conversation, for the sake of politeness attempted to throw in a remark here and there; but he soon observed that it was not necessary, as North entirely ignored them, and desisted. For three hours North sustained his singular soliloquy, which his listener observed to be methodically divided into separate parts.

First, that we have *always* existed: being creatures of eternity, which can no more have a beginning than it can have an ending. Secondly, that this life is only a short phase, detached from the immensity of our existence for the purpose of punishment, because of some error committed in that former life. Thirdly, that no human being can die until he has *suffered;* and, having suffered to the extent of despair, it matters not how soon, nor *how*, he dies. Fourthly, that, being dead, his soul goes back to its former life and its former body, and the shell which it has inhabited here simply falls back into its original state of dust. Fifthly, that throughout the eternity of time to come we may be banished, again and again, to this planet and to that, until we have, in turn, inhabited every planet of the universe, which is not merely bounded by that portion of creation of which we have cognizance. The final grand climax being that the soul which dares to return unsummoned to its original estate can only be trans-

ferred to another planet for the completion of its trial, —such worlds as the earth being the only *hell* contained in all the universe.

As the clock struck twelve he arose to take his leave, begging to be excused for his protracted stay, and exclaiming wonderingly over the rapid flight of time. At the door he turned suddenly, and asked Kingsley if he had a pistol. "I am going into a strange country for a few days, and may have use for one. I never had one of my own."

Kingsley brought out a small revolver from his wardrobe, and handed it to North. "Where are you going?" he inquired.

Mr. North drew nearer the light to examine it. "It is all loaded," he said, with a queer smile. "Where am I going? Kingsley, you will be wanting to come, too, before long. Perhaps you *will* come, but it will be by another route,—the gallows!"

Kingsley reached his hand for the pistol, but it was too late!—the contents of one barrel were already in his singular visitor's breast.

The report of the pistol and the sound of the falling body roused the whole house. Kingsley was raising the gasping man and calling his name in a horrified tone, when there came a clatter of feet along the hall, and a banging at the door. Perceiving that no one entered, he dropped the body, and went to open the door. It was locked, and the key gone!

While he searched the room for the key, the banging and requests for admittance grew louder and louder. "Wait a moment, friends," he called out; "the door is locked, and I can't find the key."

After searching the whole room minutely, he found it in North's pocket. He opened the door, and let in a crowd of horrified men and terror-stricken women. Among the latter was the landlady, who shrieked that her house was disgraced forever! that its irreproachable name, as the quietest and most select and re-

spectable boarding-house in the city, was ruined! and much more to the same effect; while the men divided their attention between the dying man and the composed but troubled-looking owner of the room.

"The man shot himself,—for what purpose God alone knows," he exclaimed, in reply to their inquiries. "We had no quarrel, no hard feelings, as far as I know. I have no idea why he came *here* to kill himself. He was crazy, probably."

An inquest was held, and Kingsley arrested,—"as a matter of form," the officers said; but they looked very suspiciously at the blood upon his sleeve, and took charge of the pistol. He immediately dispatched a note to Ophelia: "Do not be alarmed," he wrote; "North shot himself in my room last night, and I am under arrest. Of course I shall be released as soon as the trial comes off."

I do not propose to go through the tedious details of this trial, nor to relate at length the unexpected array of evidence which the cunning lunatic had devised for the ruin of his unsuspecting victim.

By this pre-arranged evidence it was proven, through the testimony of several reliable witnesses, that North and Kingsley were not upon good terms; that they had been, and were still, rivals; that North was in possession of some secret knowledge of a disagreeable, perhaps disgraceful, nature against Kingsley, which, if divulged, would bring him to grief. In truth, the firmament looked dark for Kingsley.

Ophelia Berges, being summoned to the witness-stand, confessed that she had formerly been engaged to Mr. North, and that she was now engaged to Mr. Kingsley, but denied that the latter had anything whatever to do with breaking the former engagement. Also stated that North had acted very strangely, and told different stories in regard to his family, at one time saying they were dead, at another that they were in Kansas; and gave it as her belief that he was deranged.

Mr. Jenkins, a brother-in-law of North's, deposed that North had informed him of the death of his family by fever, and of their interment in Kansas, alleging that he had come to L—— for the purpose of making arrangements in regard to their removal to the cemetery of that city.

Another witness—an insignificant little witness—was discovered in North's pocket,—a letter addressed, in a lady's hand, to a well known citizen of L——, who had been for some time missing; also, a memorandum-book belonging to the same individual. The letter was one of those innocent-looking but deadly weapons —fit representatives of feminine inconstancy and cruelty—with which the heartless belle disposes of a troublesome devotee. The refined cruelty with which she inflicts a punishment, of whose severity she has no conception, and with sweet resignation washes her hands of the whole affair, was plainly depicted in that letter; and a certain gay belle, placidly reading the morning's paper in her own boudoir, felt her blood suddenly turn cold as her eye fell upon it in the printed columns; but, happily, the signature had been omitted, and her composure was soon restored. It troubled her little what had become of "poor Beverly," so that her own falsity was concealed.

From "poor Beverly's" memoranda he was traced, by his family, to his hermitage upon the plains, where his hut and his bones were discovered. Another detachment, composed of Mrs. North's relatives, set out for Kansas, where, after diligent search, the ashes of the little cabin home, with the bleaching bones of its inmates, were discovered upon the wide prairie.

In the mean time detectives from St. Louis were upon his track, and finally identified him as the perpetrator of the mysterious murder committed there a short time before in a livery-stable.

Kingsley was released from confinement, but his faith in human friendship was utterly demoralized.

Ophelia, and her friends the Harpers, alone had stood by him under the cloud of suspicion which had for awhile overhung his character and name. He was tired of the place and all its people. He was tired, too, of his harassing and ill-remunerated position as editor; tired of the continued drain upon his mind,—the daily cry for "copy,"—and he determined to resign, and seek employment in a more lucrative and more congenial field.

CHAPTER XXX.

LOVE IN A COTTAGE.

This pretty white cottage, John, with a veranda in front overrun with vines, and a graveled walk overarched with wide-spreading evergreens, reaching from the front gate to the door, is the home of the Kingsleys. They had a quiet wedding at Mrs. Harper's, and no tour, except to this sequestered spot in the pretty village of B——. Kingsley has a professorship in the college, and entered upon his new duties the week following his marriage.

It all seems very strange to Ophelia,—this being married. She appears to herself, as she sits at the study window watching for her husband's return, *not* her old prosaic self, but an enchanted princess transported to a castle of dreams. How had all this happiness come about?—this sublime content, which it seems to her that *nothing* could ever disturb?

But she was in no mood to analyze. A book rested in her lap, though she was not reading. Her mind was too full of her own teeming thoughts. She looked out upon the grassy lawn, the towering trees, with glimpses of balmy sky peering through the interstices,

with a sense of dreamy ecstasy, which was heightened by the unusual beauty of the evening.

Just as she had fixed her wandering thoughts upon the open page before her, there was a familiar step upon the graveled walk. She did not run to meet him, but only looked up with a smile of serene content to catch the glance of dark eyes which ever brightened as they met hers, as if a new light had entered them. She does not even rise as he enters; but as he bends over and touches her lips with a pressure that is deeper and more fervent than of yore, she pats his cheek and utters some term of endearment invented by Adam or Eve, perhaps, in the imbecile days of *their* honeymoon.

He sits down by her, and, taking the book from her hand, inquires how she has spent the afternoon, and relates, in return, whatever of interest had occurred in his own experience. All the petty vexations which are sure to transpire in the life of every human being he left at the gate, and hers vanished at the first glance of those eloquent eyes, eyes that were full of magnanimity and strength, such as inspire confidence and peace.

How strange she was! How new and interesting! How different from all other women whom he had ever known! Her dainty shyness, which held all her deepest thoughts and feelings in reserve, did not displease him. *He* was not shy nor reserved, but revealed every thought, and thus gently led the way to those deep confidences which, with reserved natures, can be reached only through the deepest sympathy. How unfathomable and intense was the nature he had once thought so shallow and chill! He could not conceal his surprise at the sort of mind she had and the extent of her love for him. He grew humble under the softening influence of his great happiness,—for how had *he* merited so great a blessing?—and began to love her pious ways, which had at one time threatened to keep them forever asunder.

And she, a new world was spread out before her. The little fields of fancy, of thought and feeling, which she had explored over and over again, expanded into wide vistas under the guidance of her bold companion. His more daring mind led her forth into the illimitable universe of thought, upon whose strange and vast domains the feminine mind is too timid and cautious to venture in solitude.

It is man's prerogative to hew paths through the primeval forests of thought, after which woman may smooth, elaborate, and beautify. The feminine imagination may be vivid, but it is seldom creative. Their minds oftentimes take strong and deep hold upon that which is presented to their view, but make few voyages of discovery.

She began to understand how comprehensive and inexhaustible is the human mind; as full of the capacity for variation as the human countenance, and yet as fixed in its laws of similitude; as insatiable as the sea, which devours all the streams of the world and yet is not full. Yea, *more* insatiable than the sea, which is drained by fogs and vapors, losing as much as it gains, while the mind expands and expands, taking in everything, yet losing nothing.

Under the inspiration of congenial companionship and the rapture of a full and free interchange of thought, Ophelia's *real*, intense, earnest, magnanimous nature came to the surface, and shone in the light of an industrious, charitable, and loving life.

The book which she had been reading was the Bible, and as he fluttered the leaves idly she proffered a request which had been in her mind for some time before, that he should read a chapter to her every evening—she loved so much to hear him read.

He consented without demur, and forthwith selected one of the chapters from the pithy Book of Job; after which they entered into a lively discussion upon the prominent characteristics of the sorely chastened sage.

Upon all biblical questions Ophelia rose superior to her husband, whose magnanimous spirit yielded the palm without hesitancy. All her life—especially in its troubled portions—Ophelia had been an earnest student of the Bible, and this gave to her opinions and manner an earnestness and force which nothing but the study of irrefragable truth could have given it, and which could not fail to impress.

"Oh, have your way," he said, in conclusion. "That I have you, Ophelia, contents me to that extent that I feel inclined to be easily satisfied in regard to all other rights and privileges." And then he stretched himself upon the smoking-lounge, and pretended to grumble that he was irretrievably allied to "a pious little prig" who was forever urging him into desperate attempts at reform, and disturbing his ease with extortionate demands upon his capacity for improvement, and who was likely to go on and on, urging him into responsibilities, self-sacrifices, and mortifications, until every vestige of his freedom should be gone, and the whole of his time consumed in reading his Bible, saying prayers, and playing the good Samaritan generally. And where was her guarantee that all these investments of time and energy were to result in anything beneficial to his interests?

Then Ophelia made reply: "'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.'"

Furthermore, she explained her view of religion as consisting in sacrificing a *few* of the pleasures of this world, such as are hurtful to ourselves and displeasing to God, to obtain an eternity of bliss: accepting whatever good fortune may accrue from our endeavors with

gratitude, and whatever misfortunes may chance to befal with patient endurance; proving ourselves steadfast through seasons of gloom as in seasons of sunshine and rejoicing. With all that, having done nothing but repay the debt of gratitude and service due the Author of our being: if we are saved, it is a gift of God, and not a reward that we have earned.

Sometimes he treated her as a child of whom he was fond, but whom he loved to tease; at others he accorded her a reverential affection, as to one far above him. And while she deferred to his superior judgment in all relating to worldly concerns, he willingly submitted to her spiritual guidance.

She did not often speak to him of religion, save through the beauty of a pure and godly life,—an argument more forcible and drastic than any words she could have uttered. She neglected none of her former observances, but went to church regularly, read her Bible, and prayed "as aforetime."

Often they had their little debates over the chapters which he read, and I doubt not Kingsley was much surprised at the wonderful things he found in the grand Book of Books, which he had studied so little before.

Marriage did not put an end to all their trials, but they always kept near each other in heart and mind, and never allowed diverse opinions, nor that bane of married life, gradual estrangement, to mar their domestic happiness. Each had that strong capacity for loving which disdains a lukewarm affection, and that exclusiveness of devotion which, fixing itself upon one object, will have none other. Under the fervor of his affection, Ophelia's metallic nature melted into the tenderest pliancy. Her mind was like wax in his hands, and her moods always took their character from his.

There were trials upon trials of patience and confidence, but what cared they for trials? They loved each other, they trusted the Master,—what upon earth had power to do them harm? Love and trust make strong.

It is the want of these which undermines the very foundation of strength.

As a slender rivulet increases in strength and volume as it speeds onward, until it is swollen into a mighty stream, so life, as it advances, gathers more joys and more sorrows, deeper thoughts and wider views, and, more than all, nobler, higher aims.

I do not wish to mislead you, John, into the supposition that the Kingsleys stepped immediately from poverty into affluence and ease, or that Ophelia resumed her old luxurious and indolent habits of life. She had somewhat else to do besides read, practice elaborate sonatas, and discuss theology and the sciences. She had her house to keep in order and her cooking to do.

Once upon a time, if Ophelia had been required to cook a single meal, she would have considered herself basely misused. She would have baked her face, burnt her fingers (and smeared herself from top to toe with flour and grease), and brought in her ill-cooked viands with the air and look of a martyr. *Now*, if you should sit down to her neat and substantial table, you would not know that she, who sat so serenely at its head, had experienced any practical knowledge of how it had all come to pass.

In that olden time she had thought the whole of her duty accomplished when she had dressed herself becomingly and exerted herself to the fullest extent of her ability to entertain her friends. In this new era of her existence she had awakened to the knowledge that life does not lie upon the surface of things; that to exist fully and completely one must toil, endure, suffer,—whereby we are made capable of enjoyment.

It seems to me that the tendency of this present age is too much toward a separation of the sexes. Their occupations generally keep them apart during the day, and for recreation men resort to clubs, games, or races, while the women, left alone, fall back upon the inex-

haustible resources of scandal and dress. How much less sighing after unattainable perfection, how much less observing of each other's faults and fretting over irremediable evils, if husbands and wives—and brothers and sisters, as well—were as generous with their pleasures and enjoyments as they usually are with their grievances.

Not participating in the general haste to get rich which characterizes the people of these United States, Ophelia and her husband had large margins of leisure, which were appropriated to recreation and improvement. These hours were spent by Kingsley in literary pursuits,—writing and study; and with such an efficient aid as Ophelia, I am inclined to believe that our quondam "reporter" is likely to make his mark in the literary world.

One evening in the early spring, as Kingsley sat at his writing table deeply engrossed in the preparation of a manuscript, and Ophelia reclined in an easy-chair not far away, bending a perplexed brow over an exegesis of the "Credit Mobilier fraud," gradually impressing upon her mind how public insecurity may be produced by private corruption, and how the safety, as well as reputation, of nations depends upon the strict integrity of its rulers, there was a sharp tinkle of the door-bell.

"It must be the professor," said Ophelia, rising and throwing aside her book, "and I am very glad he has come. He will straighten my ideas in regard to these political entanglements with a few words."

"A very mild thrust, Ophelia," said Kingsley, smiling. "Really, I had forgotten your anxiety of mind in regard to the national welfare."

There was no time for further tilting, but Ophelia made her exit with a defiant toss of the head that was equal to a chorus of trumpets. In a few moments more she made her reappearance, leading a little girl, whose keen black eyes darted into every corner of the room at once, finally settling upon Kingsley, who was still writing.

"I'm going to have that dog!" she exclaimed, breaking away from Ophelia and seizing upon Kingsley's inkstand.

"Oh, no! I wouldn't if I were you," said Kingsley, placing his hand firmly upon the bronze dog which held his ink.

She looked a moment into Kingsley's firm eye, then relinquished her attempt as a dead speculation. "Papa, *I* didn't do anything," she exclaimed, in a self-assured tone, to the gentleman who stood in the doorway regarding the scene with a sarcastic smile,—"I was just as *good*. And he hitted I too—I declare he did, now, sure and certain."

"Truthful, innocent childhood!" said the gentleman, ironically. "You must have *hitted* her, Kingsley. It is not possible she could be guilty of an untruth. Truthfulness, you know, is inherent in childhood, and comes by instinct."

"Waltman, as I live!" exclaimed Kingsley, rising with a look of mingled surprise and pleasure. "When did you arrive? Why, you are as brown as a Turk, and as handsome as ever, notwithstanding the streaks of gray I see beginning to mingle with your dark locks."

"Yes, I have lived fast," he returned, "and accept the consequences of looking elderly and *blasé* without complaint. I arrived in L—— some three or four days ago; I left my wife there, with some friends of hers, and ran off down here for a few hours' conversation with you."

"So you are married again?" said Ophelia, regarding him thoughtfully. "I had not heard of your second marriage."

"You look as if you did not entirely approve of it," he said, laughing a little constrainedly. "I will tell you all about it. You know when I went to the benighted island of Chow-wow, as consul and representative of a great nation, it was with the alacrity of one

who escapes from a stormy sea into a serene harbor, but I found the harbor about as stormy as the sea. It is not in my nature to remain isolated from, and uninfluenced by, my surroundings; and but for a counteracting influence, no doubt I should at this instant be engaged in a pitched battle with the belligerent natives of Chow-wow. This power was represented in the person of Ida Hartley, daughter of the ex-consul, who had substituted commercial pursuits for his official duties, which, by the way, had failed to remunerate him sufficiently for the respectable support of his family."

"Ida Hartley!" exclaimed Ophelia; "I wonder if it can be the same young lady with whom I was associated as music-teacher, in the B—— Institute?—the most amiable, unselfish person I ever knew."

"The same," confirmed Sid; "I am glad you know her. That will save me much description and explanation. All that it is necessary to add is that there is perfect confidence between us, and a true, earnest, sober affection. If she had known that 'the Kingsleys' included an old friend of hers, she would have accompanied me on this visit, as well as this little vixen, whom I brought along, partly to relieve Ida from the care of her (though she has much better control over her than I), and partly to exhibit to you a specimen of humanity in its natural, unregenerate state."

"She's a sweet little darling, I'm sure," said Ophelia.

"I ain't, now!" And, truly, her appearance just then justified her own estimate of herself. "I'm hungry: I want a cake," was her next remark.

"Certainly she shall have a cake," replied Ophelia, disappearing in the direction of the dining-room, notwithstanding that Sid insisted she oughtn't to have it, as she had just had her supper. The remainder of the evening she spent in munching cake, and in teaching a music-stand its letters. Armed with Kingsley's riding-whip and a picture-book, and enthroned upon an ottoman, she played the petty tyrant with all the bigotry and

instinctive cruelty of her elders. If the poor music-stand whispered the wrong letter, it was fearfully chastised, and threateningly warned of the dire consequences of not being better posted in future.

When her papa arose to take his departure, she protested severely against being removed from her present comfortable quarters, but finding her parent inexorable, she exacted a promise that she should come back again. "Say yes, *harder*," was her shrewd protestation against Sid's feeble lie.

"I see, Kingsley, that you have relinquished that idea of yours that you were destined to an early death," remarked Sid, slily, as they stood at the hall-door.

"Yes," returned Kingsley, laughing merrily. "I have other things to occupy my mind now, rather more pleasing, and much more encouraging. I am not expecting to die soon. This life is altogether too comfortable an affair to inspire a wish to have done with it."

"It can be made more than comfortable," returned Sid gravely. "It can be made a grand success, and a blessing to ourselves as well as to others."

The summer is ended: my story is done. I am a little wearied, though not near so much as if I had plodded through the tedious work *alone*.

Whenever I thought, "John is listening, John is pleased," then my thoughts ran more fluently, and I felt the revivifying influence of congenial companionship. I have wanted to please him, because his nature is genial, truthful and magnanimous, and I knew that in pleasing him I could not go very far wrong.

And I am very loth to give you up, John, because I have a faint suspicion that you will be the only sympathetic, appreciative audience I will ever obtain. You look a little serious, too, and I fancy there is in your mind a prophetic dread of the fate which lies in wait for me in the great wide world, into whose hands my future is thrown.

With this book my novitiate ends, and, hereafter, I can have no excuse for shielding myself from the gaze of the public behind your sturdy shoulders. As you rise to leave me all alone, my little sanctum suddenly expands into

> "A vast lake of physiognomies, whose waves
> Are human faces."

I hear a clamor of many voices. Already I feel the awful stare of the "public eye." I perceive that some smile, and others frown: some murmur applause, others disapproval,—but *more* disapproval; for it is a characteristic of the human mind to take more pleasure in the detection of fault than in the discovery of anything estimable.

Do I quake and tremble at the hoot and hurrah? Do I shrink away, and feel myself to be altogether less than nothing? No, no, John. There is something invigorating in sharp, keen criticism. Like the vigorous blast, it infuses into our sluggish veins new life and energy.

Bearing in mind that a noted reviewer once inveighed against *dead ripeness* in the outset, as a sure indication of future deterioration and decay, and recalling Lord Byron's insipid "Hours of Idleness," and the modest outstart of various other celebrated writers, I am encouraged to erect some towering edifices upon that vague and airy estate entitled The Future. However, whether it prove a success or a failure, this book inaugurates a career, even though it prove an Iliad of defeats.

Farewell, John. Be comforted: for you shall see me again, I assure you.

THE END.

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